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ABSTRACT

An era of substantial growth in investment of resources, program development, and research has led to tangible gains in the scope and quality of early childhood education programs. However, the system of early childhood education programs is plagued by unequal access and inconsistent, inadequate levels of quality. Additionally, the focus of federal policy debate has shifted from improving specific programs to more global and ideological concerns of federalism and fiscal policy. This study was designed to provide information about the effects of current government policy and funding efforts on the shape and quality of local early childhood agencies. The study analyzed and documented significant local examples of innovative and successful reforms in early childhood services. The document, the first of three in a series, contains an analysis of past research and recent policy trends and presents seven case studies of local early childhood initiatives (including Head Start grantees, local school districts, and child-care agencies). All projects serve children from birth to 5 years of age from families of low to moderate incomes. The programs involve sponsorship by one or more state or federal programs and include a significant component of outreach, involvement, and service to parents and other family members. The report highlights strategies to promote child development, strategies to serve and involve families, management strategies, and policy effects in local agencies. Nine policy recommendations are offered, some of which include: (1) coordinate expansion of federal and state public investment to equalize access to quality early childhood programs; (2) support funding rates that are consistent with program and work-force quality; (3) encourage local and private-sector investment in early childhood services; (4) set program standards that are also flexible for meeting local needs; (5) support local agencies; (6) build a supportive infrastructure and management-development system to support program quality and innovation; (7) create leadership/management development system; (8) ease administrative burdens in administering multiple public early childhood programs; and (9) build community planning and responsibility for each childhood service. To improve practice, the report recommends that program administrators refine and promote teaching excellence within the paradigm of developmentally appropriate practice; continue to foster staff development; promote continuity with elementary schools and successful transitions; encourage adult family members' participation; help staff members negotiate the boundaries between their work and family issues; and define and implement high-quality front-line practices. Three tables are included. (Contains 153 references.) (LMI)

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Studies of Education Reform

EARLY CHILDHOOD REFORM IN SEVEN COMMUNITIES

FRONT-LINE PRACTICE, AGENCY MANAGEMENT, AND PUBLIC POLICY

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October 1996

The Studies of Education Reform were initiated by the former Office of Research in OERI under the guiding hand of its Acting Director, Joseph C. Conaty, currently Director of OERI's National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment.

Studies of Education Reform

The 12 studies were commissioned by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in 1991 and were all completed by fall 1995. Each study comprises three volumes. Volume I contains a discussion of the study, case study summaries of the schools or school districts examined, and recommendations. Volume II contains detailed case studies. Volume III is a technical appendix explaining the study's methodology. OERI is publishing all Volumes I as a set. Titles in this series are:

Systemic Reform
Early Childhood Reform in Seven Communities
Education Reform and Students At Risk
Parent and Community Involvement in Education
The Uses of Time for Teaching and Learning
Systemic Reform in the Professionalism of Educators
Study of Curriculum Reform
Assessment of Student Performance
Assessment of School-Based Management
School Reform and Student Diversity
Technology and Education Reform
Study of School-to-Work Initiatives

The other two volumes for each study are available through the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) system.

This study was funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RP 91-172007. The content does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

PREFACE

The Studies of Education Reform project was initiated by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, to examine the implementation and effects of twelve significant education reform strategies, including student assessment, parent community involvement, uses of technology, and early childhood services. Twelve research projects were funded to analyze local examples of successful implementation of reforms, to inform practitioner and policy audiences. This research on early childhood reforms was conducted by the National Association of State Boards of Education and the Harvard Family Research Project.

The project design involved analysis of past research and recent policy trends and the preparation of seven case studies of local early childhood initiatives. To reflect the diversity of providers of programs for young children and their families, case study sites included Head Start grantees, local school districts, and child care agencies. All projects serve children from low- to moderate-income, ages birth through age five; involve sponsorship by one or more state or federal programs; and include a significant component of outreach, involvement, and service to parents and other family members.

Chapter I provides an Executive Summary which distills the project purposes, questions, findings, and implications for improving practice and policy. Chapter II sets this study in a research context by summarizing recent research on child care and education program strategies, initiatives aimed at strengthening and serving parents and families, and analyses of public policies in the early childhood sector. Chapter III provides a summary of the research strategy and key questions examined in this project. Chapter IV provides background information on the seven case studies which formed the basis for our analysis, including data on program organization, funding, forms of services for children, family support and involvement strategies, and approaches to collaboration with other community agencies.

Chapter V conveys the major research findings across the case study sites in strategies for supporting child development; strategies for serving and involving families; management strategies in fundraising and providing leadership in program quality; and observations about how state and federal policies influence the work of these seven local agencies. Chapter VI describes evaluation strategies and data on outcomes from the case study sites. Chapter VII provides an analysis of the fiscal, managerial, and staff resources necessary to implement high quality early childhood programs.

Chapter VIII analyzes the implications of this research for efforts to improve public policy for young children and families, in terms of fiscal strategies, approaches to enhancing local program quality, and strategies in federal-state-local government relationships. The Chapter goes on to outline challenges for improving local program practices, in terms of improving child development and learning, strengthening families, and improving program management. Chapter IX concludes the report by describing implications for further research.

Two additional volumes provide additional information. Volume II contains seven narrative case studies, providing detailed description of the community context, service strategies, organizational and fiscal attributes, and outcomes of each initiative. Volume III describes our research design and methods, including our strategy for selecting case study sites and copies of interview guides used in our field work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study of how local organizations implement complex government programs was itself a complicated interorganizational initiative. The National Association of State Boards of Education, the Harvard Family Research Project, the U.S. Department of Education, Anne Mitchell (an independent consultant of early childhood policy issues), a panel of technical advisors, a set of authors of commissioned papers, and busy managers and staff members in seven local early childhood agencies all made substantial investments of resources and talents to this project.

The authors are grateful to our Project Officers, Bob Thomas and Carol Chelemer, and staff at the Office of Education Research and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education for conceptualizing and sponsoring this research, for their management acumen, and for substantive advice on our plans, methods, reports, and products.

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The study could not have been accomplished without the cooperation of our seven case study sites. Directors, staff members, parents, and children were unfailingly gracious in working with us during our interviewing, focus groups, and observation of classrooms, meetings, home visits, and other project activities. Thanks to Ethel Seiderman and the late Barbara Shaw of the Parent Services Project; Jo Ann Williams at Child Development, Inc.; Diane "Rocky" Rocketenetz and Rich Hulefeld in Covington, Kentucky; Pat Noonan and Pat Bryant in Jersey City, New Jersey; Chris Carman at Inn Circle in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Elaine Draeger at Sheltering Arms, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia; and Susan Neddeau, Colleen Alivado, and Patsy Jones of the FACE Program.

Heather Weiss, Director of the Harvard Family Research Project helped to conceptualize the research design, provided strategic guidance on the worlds of public policy and family support initiatives, and contributed in many ways to the shape and quality of our final products. Other members of the Harvard Family Research Project staff also contributed research and editorial support, in particular Tamara Beauboeuf, Crystal Byndloss, Margaret Dowley, Arlie Woodrum, and Kate Wrean.

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Anne Mitchell of Early Childhood Policy Research, Inc. was a member of our original project team, and provided valuable input to the overall conceptualization of the research, to site selection and research methods, and to our overall strategy for dissemination over the course of the project. She also completed a comprehensive literature review which formed the basis for Chapter II in this report.

Helpful comments on earlier versions of this report were received from Gina Adams, Stacie Goffin, Sheila Smith, Barbara Willer, Heather Weiss, and Anne Mitchell.

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CHAPTER I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context
Research Design
Findings
Policy Recommendations
Recommendations for Improving Practice

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTEXT

Programs to support early childhood education and development have received sustained attention from government leaders and researchers in the past several decades. However, taking stock of trends in this arena of public policy reveals several troubling dilemmas:

1. **We are spending more public funds for early childhood services, but most children from low-income families are still unable to participate in a quality program before starting school.** In recent years, policymakers have crafted many new programs and invested additional resources in early childhood initiatives. For example, between 1988 and 1990, Congress created four new child care programs for low-income families, with current funding of nearly $2 billion (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 1995). Similarly, funding for the Head Start program has been expanded from $1.4 billion in 1989 to $3.5 billion in 1995. During the 1980s, the number of states sponsoring prekindergarten programs nearly tripled, to 32 states, with funding of more than $660 million; and 14 states appropriated additional funds to supplement Head Start (Adams & Sandfort, 1994). However, recent data show that only 45% of children from low-income families are able to attend an early childhood program, compared to participation rates of 73% for their peers from more affluent homes (National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Government Accounting Office, 1993), and that child care programs serving children from low- and moderate-income families have huge waiting lists of eligible families (Blank, 1995).

2. **As we learn more about the components and qualities of effective programs, we see more clearly the inadequacies of existing policies on program quality and funding.** We have a growing knowledge base regarding the benefits of high quality early childhood programs for children and families -- and about the components and requirements for providing high quality services (Hayes, et.al., 1990; Howes, et.al., 1992; Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Team, 1995). However, unfortunately we are learning an equal amount about the uneven and inadequate levels of quality in many public and private early childhood settings. Four recent national studies of child care found low levels of quality, including the alarming finding that 40% of care for infants fails to meet even minimal standards for health and safety. (Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Team, 1995). A national study of teachers in child care centers found low levels of compensation and training, and annual rates of staff turnover approaching 40% (Whitebook, et.al., 1990). Studies also show that the federal government and the states are not applying what we know about program quality in program regulations and funding policies (Adams, 1990, Morgan, et.al., 1993).

3. **In the midst of bipartisan agreement on improving and investing in early childhood programs, the concerns of federal policymakers have shifted to restructuring federal-state relationships and efforts to reduce the federal deficit.** While improving early childhood programs has been a priority of Presidents, governors, and legislative branch leaders from both political parties, the current debate in Washington, D.C. is centered on reshaping our overall federal-state partnership and balancing the federal budget. Federal early childhood policy is now being considered in the context of efforts to devolve authority to state government, to consolidate and deregulate federal programs, and to limit federal expenditures. An ongoing movement to expand and improve early childhood programs has been displaced by a new set of broader and more ideological issues and questions.

Thus, an era of substantial growth in investments, program development, and research has led to tangible gains in the scope and quality of early childhood services, but also a sharpened understanding of the distance which remains between our present situation and a fully equitable and adequate system for supporting young children and parents. Moreover, the focus of federal policy debate have shifted from improving specific early childhood programs to more global and ideological concerns of federalism and fiscal policy. Within this context, this study provides information about the effects of current government policy and funding efforts on the shape and quality of local early childhood agencies.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This report is the product of a study commissioned by the Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, to document and analyze significant local examples of innovative and successful reforms in early childhood services. The study was designed to provide useful information to early childhood **practitioners** who work directly with children and families, **managers** who direct early childhood agencies and programs, and **policymakers** who make decisions about program and funding strategies. Accordingly, the central purposes for this examination of early childhood strategies are as follows:

- To describe innovative, effective local strategies for serving young children and their parents and contributing to assuring that participants are prepared for success when they enter elementary school.

- To analyze key factors in the design and implementation of these programs.

- To describe how state and federal policies support or inhibit successful management and front-line service strategies.

- To provide recommendations to early childhood practitioners, managers and policymakers on how to create more high quality early childhood programs.

The principal research strategy was preparing seven detailed case studies of local programs. Based on analysis of research literature and policy trends, we selected initiatives with the following characteristics:

- Programs which serve young children from low-income and working families who are dealing with challenges such as domestic violence, illiteracy, social isolation, and substance abuse.

- Programs which provide comprehensive services, defined as including early care and education, health services, parenting education, and linkages to other social and family services.

- Strategies which provide services and supports to both young children and their parents.

- Agencies which offer stable, sustained, and continuous support, rather than only a single year of program services.

- Initiatives recognized for providing high quality and innovative forms of services to families and an environment which supports professional development of staff members.

- Projects which reflect a diversity of service strategies (such as both home-based and classroom-centered delivery) and a range of organizational settings, including Head Start, public school, and child care agencies.

Based on these criteria, our seven case study sites were the following:

- **Child Development, Inc. (CDI) in Russellville, Arkansas** is a Head Start grantee which provides comprehensive services through home-based programs, prekindergarten and child care services, and special initiatives for teen parents, participants in Arkansas's welfare reform initiative, and families in need of literacy or employment training.

- **Inn Circle, Inc. in Cedar Rapids, Iowa** is a Head Start-based initiative to serve homeless, single parents with young children in a residential facility -- combining child care services with education, employment, and community-building services for families.

- **Sheltering Arms, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia** combines family support and child care services to low income and working families using an innovative blend of funding from the United Way, corporations, state and federal child care programs, and fees from parents.

- **The Parent Services Project (PSP) in Fairfax, California** is a national strategy to infuse family support and involvement principles and services into child care and early childhood agencies.

- **The James E. Biggs Early Childhood Center in Covington, Kentucky** houses prekindergarten, family support and home visitation programs, developed and managed by an innovative partnership between a local school district and a non-profit child care agency.

- **Jersey City, New Jersey's Early Childhood Program**, a prekindergarten program and a curriculum and staff development initiative in primary grade classrooms, began through state funding and has grown substantially through the investment of local school funds.

- **Family and Child Education (FACE)**, a national initiative of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, combines three research-based strategies (Parents As Teachers, Family Literacy, and the High/Scope curriculum) to provide Native American families with home-based parent education, adult literacy services, and a prekindergarten classroom program.

FINDINGS

Consistent with our focus on assisting practitioners, managers, and policy audiences, our findings are presented in the form of strategies observed across our seven case studies for working with children and families, in local management of resources and program quality, and in terms of how state and federal policies influence the shape and effectiveness of local services.

Strategies to Promote Child Development

1. Programs implement a developmentally appropriate approach in classroom environments and instruction.

Across visits to Head Start, child care, and public school agencies, we found a highly uniform approach to teaching and classroom environments, characterized by adherence to the tenets of "developmentally appropriate practice" as promulgated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987). Key elements of this approach include active learning through giving children opportunity to choose from a variety of interest centers, equipped to provide different social and learning experiences. Teaching strategies often include an overarching theme to tie together materials, discussion, and activities. Teachers use observational checklists, anecdotal records, and samples of children's work to track their progress, understand their styles and rates of learning and development, and assess their own work as professionals.

2. Teachers work to respond to the individual needs of students within a framework of developmentally appropriate practice.

Within a general framework of age-appropriate practices, teachers work to meet the individual needs of children due to disabilities, cultural and linguistic diversity, or challenges of growing up in stressful, violent environments. For example, teachers adjust their routines and expectations to many children who are aggressive or who have difficulty expressing themselves, playing with other children, and responding to staff requests and program rules. Teachers adjust the pace and variety of activities, provide more time for nurturing individual children, work with parents to understand sources of stress in the home and neighborhood, and make use of diagnostic observation of children with severe difficulties by other staff members and specialists.

3. Teachers include parents in the daily life of early childhood classrooms.

Early childhood teachers orient their daily work towards families in several ways, including their design of the physical environment of classrooms, their regular use of parents as volunteers, and efforts to communicate with parents around the progress of their children. For example, FACE programs include daily Parent And Child Time, where parents leave their adult literacy classes to read, work, play with and observe their children. Covington, Kentucky sponsors a highly successful training program to prepare mothers to work in classrooms and Dad's Nights which draw over 100 fathers to work with their children at the center. Programs develop mechanisms to ensure that classroom staff can draw on information and insights gained by other staff who work with parents.

4. Programs collaborate with public schools to improve the transition of children and families as they enter kindergarten and to enhance continuity between early childhood and school programs.

Programs and schools have developed formal agreements for sharing information about children and promoting the involvement of parents in kindergarten programs. Teachers bring their children to visit nearby elementary schools to become familiar with the facility and the routines of kindergarten classrooms. Early childhood and public school teachers exchange visits to observe classrooms across program lines to learn about how each setting works with children. Early childhood programs coach parents in how to ask questions of school personnel and give them the skills and confidence to handle future issues on their own. Projects and schools collaborate in joint staff development activities with early childhood, kindergarten, and primary grade teachers.

Strategies To Serve and Involve Families

Early childhood agencies use a variety of strategies to address parents' needs to work with their young children, to pursue further education and employment opportunities, to connect with other community agencies, and to move towards self-sufficiency and citizenship.

1. Programs seek to enhance parents' skills, knowledge, and motivation to be involved with their children's education.

A core strategy in all seven agencies are parent education services, offered through organized classes, the provision of learning materials for families to use at home, peer support networks, and home visitation programs. Parents learn about child development, discuss challenges such as discipline, and engage in developmental activities with their children. Home visitors provide individual attention to each family and allow staff to learn more about home environments. Home visitors engage the child in stimulating activities to develop motor, cognitive, language, and social skills. Parents and the home visitor share information about the child's behaviors, milestones are noted, and parents learn about the value of talking to and playing with their child.

2. Early childhood programs support parents in their journey towards education and self-sufficiency.

Programs offer parents the opportunity to improve literacy skills, continue their education, obtain employment training, and move toward self-sufficiency. Family coordinators help parents prioritize goals and gain access to educational opportunities within the program or in the community. One advantage of linking adult education services with early childhood programs lies in the non-threatening, nurturing settings of such programs. This is especially important for parents who dropped out of school and might have negative attitudes about learning. However, helping families move toward self-sufficiency is not without challenges. In communities where economic opportunities are very limited, it is very difficult to convince parents that education and training will make them employable. In other cases, when parents are working, looking for work, or involved with seasonal employment, they have problems in attending and completing literacy and job training classes.

3. Programs help parents gain access to services which address their needs through partnerships with community agencies.

The seven programs help families gain access to other services and programs through referrals, shared service contracts, case management strategies, and more comprehensive networking and system change efforts. Partnership relationships also involve difficulties, such as inadequate availability of health services, affordable child care, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services. Coordination is also difficult when agencies do not share the same philosophy of working with families.

4. Programs create "caring communities" for parents by providing social support and catalyzing participation in community institutions.

The process of helping families become self-sufficient involves a careful blend of providing needed services, reducing family isolation, expanding social support networks, and giving families a chance to contribute and be valued by their community. Very often the relationships between parents and staff have the most impact on parents' involvement with the program. When staff make an effort to welcome and build trusting relationships with families, parents respond by making the effort to work closely with them and to live up to their expectations. For some parents, this engagement catalyzes broader involvement in community affairs and advocacy for children. Parent-to-parent relationships are another important source of support and an opportunity for parents to extend themselves as contributors in a program setting. Some programs create skills/resource exchange networks that enable families to develop practical group solutions to their needs. A final strategy which equips parents to contribute to their communities is experience in decisionmaking. Agencies invite parents to participate on policy committees, to engage in decisions on budget and service priorities, evaluation, fundraising and staffing. In all these ways, parents are encouraged to move from clients of public agencies to contributing members of their communities.

Management Strategies

While these seven managers work in different types of organizations in terms of history, size, complexity, and structure, they all balance energy and effort between two crucial priorities:

- Raising money and managing relationships with varied government agencies and private sector supporters.

- Providing leadership in program quality, chiefly through nurturing, training, setting standards and inspiring the efforts of staff members.

1. Managers employ a variety of fundraising strategies to build agency services.

Local managers are pressed to raise funds to maintain their current programs, reduce waiting lists of eligible families, serve different types of community needs or new client groups, (such as teen parents or families with infants and toddlers), and anticipate contingencies such as shifts in priorities among their present mix of supports. Early childhood agencies tend to begin through support from a single state or federal program, and expand over time by garnering a wider range of public and private funding sources. Programs in this study go "beyond the usual suspects" in seeking support from economic development agencies, job training and vocational education programs, and welfare reform initiatives.

2. Managers mobilize local voluntary and private sector funds to complement state and federal program support and to enhance community ownership of early childhood services.

Agencies draw on local community resources to complement state and federal program resources. For example, the Jersey City initiative began with state department of education resources, but has expanded through local school funding. Similarly, the Covington Public Schools spent $1.8 million to purchase and renovate a facility for its early childhood program and provides in-kind fiscal management, transportation, and maintenance services to the program. Sheltering Arms uses United Way funding to support its central administrative operation and for a scholarship fund which bridges the gap between the rates of reimbursement from public vouchers and parental fees and the costs of its comprehensive, high quality services. It also solicits more than $350,000 annually from some 64 different businesses, and 26 local foundations.

3. The diversity of revenue sources used by early childhood agencies demands sophisticated management skills by program directors.

Early childhood managers contend with a "hustle factor" of competition for resources and a "hassle factor" of administrative complexity in managing diverse funding streams with conflicting requirements. Administrative complexity increases as an agency works with multiple sources, each with different timelines, reporting and refunding requirements, definitions of eligibility, and standards for staffing, allowable costs and program quality. Managers struggle to create coherent programs and a common sense of mission among staff members funded from a variety of sources.

4. Program managers set the stage for program quality by crafting staffing patterns and compensation systems for their agencies.

As local managers set up staffing and compensation systems, they attempt to strike a balance in assuring program quality, supporting career growth for staff members, and using limited resources efficiently. These choices are shaped by external mandates in staff:child ratios, credentials, and service components, and indirectly by rates of funding.

5. Administrators place a priority on professional development and supervision as central strategies in building quality front-line services.

Early childhood programs provide substantial staff development because many staff members enter the field without extensive college training or certification. The prevalence of on-the-job training and a career ladder approach to staffing distinguishes most early childhood programs from the public schools. Agencies provide direct training, subsidize enrollment in community college and higher education programs, and use their experienced teachers as mentors for newer staff. Programs also support staff and strengthen program quality through coaching and evaluation by supervisors.

6. Early childhood administrators are leaders in promoting quality services beyond the boundaries of their own agencies.

Sheltering Arms in Atlanta has created the IN TRAINING subsidiary to disseminate curriculum materials and provide training to staff from 400 early childhood programs in Georgia and neighboring states. The Parent Services Project has developed training materials and a dissemination strategy to support spread of the PSP program in other communities and settings. Local managers also serve as officers in state, regional and national organizations; write articles and deliver conference presentations; serve on monitoring and proposal review teams; and contribute to advocacy efforts to improve early childhood funding and policy.

Policy Effects In Local Agencies

These case studies show how state and federal policies influence the size, shape, and quality of local programs. They illustrate three facets of public policy: funding decisions, policy strategies to support program quality, and features of intergovernmental relationships.

1. Present levels of public investment are inadequate to support equitable access or quality services; and the present system of multiple categorical programs creates problems for local managers and for policymakers.

Our present set of state and federal early childhood programs constitute a "union of insufficiencies." No single program is funded to serve more than a fraction of its eligible clients and our cumulative public investment fails to provide equal access to services for children from low-income families. This problem is seen in these seven agencies where, in spite of successful fundraising by agile, entrepreneurial managers, programs face substantial waiting lists. For example, Child Development, Inc. has quadrupled its budget in the last six years, yet many of its centers have waiting lists equal to twice their current capacity. In addition, rates and formulas for disbursing funds are often inadequate to support a quality teaching workforce and fall well below the actual costs of delivering comprehensive, quality services (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 1990).

The diversity of public funding streams makes it costly and complicated for local managers to deal with proposal preparation, reporting, accounting, compliance with standards, and crafting a coherent approach to program services and staffing. In addition, local agencies have difficulty in reconciling differing stances on quality and differing rates of reimbursement across different agencies. For example, Child Development, Inc. cannot afford to pay a uniform salary system for all teachers due to substantial differences between Head Start and child care funding formulas. The number of different programs also handicaps policymakers when they try to understand the cumulative effects of existing spending patterns. Thus, as a funding system, early childhood programs provide inadequate levels of investment via an overly complex and opaque set of programs.

2. Fragmented authority and inconsistent standards are major weaknesses in our current approach to encouraging quality improvement in local efforts.

Current trends in political rhetoric stress the prevalence and problems of costly, obtrusive government regulation. These case studies show a very different picture in the early childhood policy sector. Rather than being overbearing and powerful, government regulation of early childhood programs is fragmented, inconsistent, and inadequate. There are no consistent policies to safeguard children against abuse nor to support the ingredients of environments which will optimize development and learning. Fragmentation and inconsistency derive from a system of separate standards for Head Start, child care, and school-based programs. Standards for child care centers are weak in a substantial number of states, due to exemptions for major segments of providers, and low standards on key dimensions such as staff: child ratios and staff training. (Adams, 1990, Morgan, et.al., 1993)

However, we also found evidence that state and federal leadership can have positive effects on local program quality -- both in setting the initial stance of programs on components of quality and in supporting improvements over time. For example, staff in the Bureau of Indian Affair's FACE projects receive extensive training, technical assistance, feedback from an external evaluation, and opportunities to network with peers from other programs. These services have helped them to implement the program model and to share innovations across project sites. New Jersey state program guidelines on staffing, parent involvement, and comprehensive services were critical positive influences in shaping the initial prekindergarten initiative in Jersey City.

Finally, the case studies also show that program quality is shaped powerfully by local decisions and non-governmental influences. For example, Sheltering Arms upholds staff to child ratios which are substantially more favorable than the state licensing requirements. Agencies also draw on professional, non-governmental sources in defining and supporting program quality. For example, several local agencies have invested in seeking accreditation of their programs by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Thus, programs take advantage of flexibility in policies to create their own local definitions of high quality, responsive services.

3. Early childhood policy reflects a balance of federal, state, and local autonomy. However, there are few forums for coherent federal, state, or local decisionmaking across early childhood programs and funding streams.

As noted above, policy decisions about early childhood services occur in a loosely-knit set of separate fiefdoms, including the Head Start policy system, the child care sector, the education for children with disabilities community, and state prekindergarten program structures. Problems of fragmentation are also seen at the community level. While we found strong individual agencies, we did not encounter a community-wide vision, design or funding system for early childhood services. There is no structure which provides access to citizens or general purpose government to be engaged in shaping decisions or contributing core support for services to all young children and parents.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides the basis to examine policy strategies which would support more widespread excellence and innovation at the local level. What policy strategies would foster more initiatives with the innovative features and high quality found in our case study sites?

1. Coordinated expansion of federal and state public investment to equalize access to quality early childhood programs.

By selecting agencies regarded as innovative and successful, this study has profiled managers with above-average success in fund-raising and program development. However, managers are forced to spend an inordinate amount of energy raising money and safeguarding the continuation of existing funding sources -- which has diverted their attention from opportunities to strengthen staff effectiveness, morale and service quality. In addition, current levels of public investment are inadequate to serve all families who need programs. Resources are particularly lacking for programs for infants and toddlers and for working poor families. Thus, a fundamental priority for early childhood policy is to provide a steady expansion of services to low-income and working families towards the goals of school readiness, family self-sufficiency, and strengthening communities.

2. Supporting rates of funding which are consistent with program quality and a quality workforce.

Early childhood funding should reflect the costs of providing quality programs which meet the needs of young children and families. Unless funding rates are adequate, programs will be unable to pay adequate salaries necessary to attract well-trained staff members, or staff will be required to work with large numbers of children. Furthermore, there should be greater consistency in rates across different state and federal funding streams.

3. Encouraging local and private sector investment in early childhood services.

A key ingredient in the success of these programs is their ability to attract local businesses, community institutions and community residents to contribute to their operations. However, there is no robust set of policy strategies to encourage this ingredient. It is difficult to create standards regarding what proportion of costs can be drawn from non-governmental sources without penalizing communities with fewer resources.

4. Setting program standards which support quality services, but with suitable flexibility about strategies for meeting local needs.

State and federal early childhood programs should be undergirded with a common commitment to quality, as embodied in consistent program standards. Research and professional judgment support regulating key factors which protect the safety of children and create the preconditions for effective nurturing and instruction; namely, group size, staff training, adult:child ratios, and support for the health, nutrition, and other core needs of children and families. All forms of early care and education should be expected to meet standards on these measures.

Yet while policies need to be stronger and more consistent in supporting quality, they should be more easy going in other realms, such as the specific form and mix of service strategies appropriate to different local communities. As these case studies illustrate, there are a variety of effective approaches to serving young children and families, including home-based and center-based programming; various approaches to engaging, serving, and involving families; and different designs for staffing programs and professional development.

5. Supporting local agencies in a dual focus of enhancing child development and strengthening families.

Policies should allow programs to respond to the survival needs, schedules, and personal stresses typical of today's poor and working poor families at the same time as they provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences and other services for young children. Head Start's comprehensive performance standards give equal status to early childhood education, health and social services, and parent involvement. Programs such as Project FACE at the Bureau of Indian Affairs combine parent education and home visits to families with infants and toddlers, a family literacy initiative, and prekindergarten classrooms. Other program guidelines should be revised to acknowledge the benefits of working simultaneously with young children and their families.

6. Building an infrastructure to support program quality and innovation.

All forms of early childhood programs and agencies should be able to benefit from the tools of monitoring, technical assistance, formative evaluation, and participation in professional networks. In particular, these case studies show the potential for peer exchange across programs and funding streams as a strategy to accelerate innovation and improvement in early childhood programs. Another crucial component is to assemble a more coherent career development system for staff members who work in early childhood programs, addressing needs for ongoing training, a career ladder of credentialed roles, and consistency across delivery systems to foster career mobility (Morgan, et.al., 1993).

7. Creating a leadership/management development system.

Early childhood program management is complex, consequential work, involving executive responsibilities of considerable scope. However, the career development system for local early childhood administrators is fragmented and random rather than coherent and purposive. Since managers work for a mix of institutions, there is no single credentialling authority for managers in this field. Indeed, in more than twenty states there are no training requirements for child care center directors. States, foundations and the federal government should collaborate in initiatives to stimulate and support local leaders -- to bolster the skills and motivation of our present cadre of talent, to develop leaders for the future, and to use existing talent to mentor and train colleagues.

8. Easing the administrative burdens involved in administering multiple public early childhood programs.

State and federal early childhood programs are designed and administered as if they were isolated entities, rather than a series of complementary funding streams and programs. Individual local managers step up to the challenge of garnering and managing multiple funding sources out of personal initiative, ambition, and vision. However, they have nowhere to turn for guidance regarding how to manage an agency with a mixed range of investors. State and federal policymakers and administrators should come together to find ways to make life simpler for local program managers, to see how different funding streams and mandates can be made to work together more easily and productively at the local level.

9. Building community planning and responsibility for early childhood services.

As much as we need to create more individual programs with the qualities of the seven included in this study, we also need a more coherent system to govern early childhood services at the community level. We need forums to guide decisions across program and agency lines and to dovetail with general purpose government. Secondly, we need a mechanism to embody and strengthen the general public interest in quality early childhood services. Early childhood services should become a concern and responsibility of local communities, rather than an activity which is perceived as directed and funded by state and federal agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING PRACTICE

Observations from these "flagship" local programs can inform practice improvement in two ways. First, they provide examples of exemplary, innovative approaches to working with children and families and, at the management level, for dealing with resource development and program quality. Second, staff and managers in these initiatives uncover and explore the next generation of challenges for practitioners. Their work points the way for their peers in other local agencies and professional organizations.

1. Refining and promoting teaching excellence within the paradigm of developmentally appropriate practice.

As staff members become skilled at managing developmentally appropriate classroom environments, programs face a new challenge of creating a second generation set of shared images of excellent teaching to guide further improvement in classroom practice. One strong emphasis within these programs is to assist teachers in taking a clinical approach to observing and tracking individual children -- getting to know them well as individuals, understanding how their minds work, and figuring out how to respond to their learning styles and developmental needs. Secondly, teachers emphasize peer observation, feedback and joint planning to deepen their understanding of individual children and to improve their work as professionals.

2. Working to continue to motivate and foster the professional development of staff members.

These flagship programs have been successful in recruiting and retaining a corps of teachers and supporting staff career development from entry level positions to attainment of an initial credential in early childhood education. They are now trying to provide practical, affordable means for staff members to continue to improve the quality of their work and to earn additional credentials to enhance their career opportunities.

3. Working to promote continuity with elementary schools and successful transitions for children and families.

The case studies illustrate several challenges in improving the early childhood-public school connection. One set of barriers to easy, positive relationships between early childhood programs and public schools are conflicts in jurisdictional boundaries. Second, there are many structural differences between early childhood agencies and public schools. These differences complicate communications and make it difficult to transfer practices and strategies from one setting to another in order to smooth out "bumps" in the transition process. Third, incentives for school/early childhood partnerships are weak and uneven. Finally, when early childhood

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programs go beyond their boundaries to attempt to influence school policies and practices, they run up against deeply embedded "cultural constructions" of schooling that are difficult to change.

4. Programs face a set of challenges trying to gain participation of adult family members.

Families are generally eager to enroll their children in early childhood programs. However, it is much harder for staff to secure parent participation. Some parents are overwhelmed with problems such as substance abuse, domestic violence, or mental health difficulties. In other families, the survival demands of obtaining food, clothing and shelter command all of parents' time and energy. Program staffs struggle to connect with all of these types of parents and to adapt activities to their needs and capacities.

5. Staff members continually negotiate the boundaries of their work with family members and the special situations they face.

Staff members have to negotiate a balanced approach to the range of demands on their work. For example, home visitors deal with a number of complex issues -- child abuse and neglect, marital problems, substance abuse, and severe mental health problems -- that they are not able to handle by themselves. They must decide whether or not to continue trying to recruit or maintain distressed families when there are other families who need their services. They have to use their judgment on continuing home visits when husbands or companions threaten them for making mothers more assertive and independent. All staff members are challenged to work with families in a way that avoids dependence and promotes independence. They juggle the roles of professional and trusted friend. Programs are trying to work out respectful relationships with families from diverse cultural backgrounds. This is a dynamic process which may involve redefining parents' attitudes toward the school, their own families, and their peers.

6. Programs face the challenge of defining and implementing high quality front line practices.

Although family support programs have proliferated over the last decade, little attention has been given to defining quality. There is no position statement on appropriate parent-focused practices as has been developed for early childhood classroom practice. This situation leaves it to local programs to create their own definitions and strategies to govern staffing patterns, professional development and support strategies, the content of parenting programs, and the organization of service delivery.

We conclude with the conviction that improving early childhood policy can improve the lives of children, families, and professionals; enhance support for and ease the burdens on public schools; and contribute to stronger families and communities. We believe this study contributes to a more complete, balanced, and grounded image of how early childhood programs work in the present policy structure. And we believe that more accurate understanding of the interplay of public funding and policies; local management, staff capacity and motivation; and responses of families and communities will lead to more constructive and successful public policy. We trust that wider appreciation of the diversity of the early childhood community, the subtleties of practice, and the dynamic effects of policy and management will lead to renewed efforts to help all young children develop to their fullest potential.

CHAPTER II: SUMMARY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research on Child Care and Prekindergarten Programs
Research on Parent Education and Family Support Programs
Research on Public Policy for Young Children & Families
Summary

II. SUMMARY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Over the past three decades an enormous number of research and evaluation studies have focused on programs to serve young children and their families. Research strategies have included small, carefully-designed research and development projects; multi-site, national demonstration initiatives; and studies of the "real world" of community-based child care, preschool, and family support agencies. This overview of trends in research will be divided into three parts:

- Studies of classroom-based child care and prekindergarten programs.

- Evaluations of initiatives aimed at strengthening parents and families.

- Research which tracks and assesses public policy towards young children and families.

RESEARCH ON CHILD CARE AND PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Research on prekindergarten and child care programs began in the 1960s and 1970s with a focus on questions of **program efficacy**, examining program outcomes and the extent to which positive outcomes persist over time after children move into elementary education. More recently, research has shifted to emphasize understanding the components of **program quality**, assessing effects of variation in program characteristics, and exploring the best approaches to producing positive, lasting outcomes (Barnett et al., 1988).

Program Efficacy Studies

The Early Intervention Research Institute (Casto, White, and Barnett, 1986) collected hundreds of reports of research studies on the effects of early childhood programs for disadvantaged and handicapped children. Most involved classroom-based programs for three- or four-year-olds and measured short-term academic outcomes, (defined as one to two years beyond the end of the program). Overall, there were positive effects in cognitive ability (measured by IQ tests) and school readiness of approximately the same magnitudes for disadvantaged and handicapped samples. Studies showed the result of a boost in IQ for children who experienced preschool intervention, ranging from one-third of a standard deviation in the Comparative Curriculum Study (Karnes, et al., 1983) to more than two standard deviations for the Milwaukee Project (Garber, 1988). Less intensive intervention of half-day preschool for one year resulted in the smaller IQ gains; while the more intensive intervention of full-day intervention almost from birth resulted in the higher IQ gains (Ramey, Bryant, & Suarez, 1985). Hubbell's 1983 review of over 1,500 studies of the Head Start Project found a similar pattern of positive short-term effects. Socio-emotional outcomes were not consistently measured in this body of literature (Datta, 1983).

A related set of research studies tracked the performance of children over time after they left early childhood interventions. In most cases, experimental groups continued to outperform controls in elementary school on school achievement tests, grade-point average, and rates of retention in grade, and placement in special education:

- In the Milwaukee Project, the experimental children did retain an IQ one standard deviation higher than the control group through age ten, while in other studies, the two groups' IQs became equivalent by age eight.

- The Perry Preschool Study found significant differences in school achievement test scores through age 19 in favor of the experimental group. Extended followup of this sample at age 27 also revealed program participants benefiting in terms of higher earnings, level of schooling completed, reduced rates of criminal activity and a variety of other measures. Cost-benefit analysis of the Perry Program found an estimated return of over $7.00 for each dollar of expense for the program. (Schweinhart, et al.,1993)

- The Rome Head Start Study (Monroe & Mc Donald, 1981), the Early Training Project (Gray, et al., 1984), the Perry Preschool Project, the Philadelphia Evaluation (School District of Philadelphia, 1984), the New York Prekindergarten Program (New York State Education Department, 1982), and the Abecedarian Project (Ramey & Campbell, 1987) found reduced placement in special education for the experimentals.

- The Karnes and Washington, DC studies found greater retention in grade for the controls. A related measure of number of students who did not drop out of high school also favored children with preschool experience in the Rome Head Start, Early Training, and Perry Preschool studies. Many of these longitudinal studies also investigated students' educational aspirations and expectations and results again favored the children who had attended preschool.

Program Quality Studies

Initial interest in assessing dimensions of program quality was seen in comparative studies of different curricula (Karnes, Schweidel, & Williams, 1983; Miller & Bizzell, 1984; Weikart, Epstein, Schweinhart, & Bond, 1978). No explainable differences were found among the various curricula's outcomes. Another body of early research, sought to understand whether child care was harmful to children. As Phillips and Howes put it in their review, "On the contrary, the overwhelming message was that children in good quality care show no signs of harm, and children from low-income families may actually show improved cognitive development" (Phillips and Howes, 1987).

The next wave of child care research focused on understanding the dimensions of the construct "quality" and representing the diversity of child care settings. Most noteworthy for its design and comprehensiveness is the National Day Care Study (NDCS)(Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979). The NDCS found that smaller groups of children and higher teacher/child ratios resulted in better social and cognitive outcomes for children. A variety of subsequent studies have found associations among lower ratios, smaller groups, better educated teachers, more constructive caregiver behavior, and better developmental outcomes for children (e.g., Field, 1980; Vandell & Powers, 1983; Clarke-Stewart & Gruber, 1984; Howes & Rubenstein, 1985; Bruner, 1980; Smith & Connolly, 1981). Another recent set of studies have examined the interaction of static variables such as group size, physical environment, and staff training with dynamic variables such as teacher/child interaction in influencing outcomes. For the most part, these studies found that attendance at higher quality centers resulted in better social, language, and cognitive outcomes for young children (McCartney, 1984; Phillips, McCartney, & Scarr, 1987; Vandell & Powers, 1983; Vandell, Henderson, & Wilson, 1987; Howes & Olenick, 1986; Rutter, 1981; Holloway and Reichart-Erickson (1988).

A recent study in California experimentally manipulated staff/child ratios from 1:8 to 1:9 or 1:10 and found evidence of declines in program quality in classrooms with higher ratios (Love, Ryer and Faddis, 1992). A similar study in Florida revealed positive effects on the quality of teaching and on child outcomes from the state's improvement of standards for teacher:child ratios and staff training. (Howes, Smith, & Galinski, 1995).

Recognizing that family and child care environments are not independent influences on a child's development, other recent research focuses on the interactions among features of the child care setting and aspects of the child's family environment such as SES, family structure and maternal satisfaction with employment (e.g., Cochran & Robinson, 1983; Howes & Olenick, 1986; Phillips, McCartney, & Scarr, 1987; Kontos & Feine 1987; Goelman & Pence 1987). The specific effects of child care depend on the quality and type of care, the child's experiences in care and the child's family context.

Family child care, which is used by about 25% of employed mothers, has only recently been included in studies of early childhood programs as a setting variation (Fosburg, 1981, Clarke-Stewart and Gruber, 1984; Goelman and Pence, 1987; among others). Describing the nature of family child care settings and the quality of children's experiences in these settings is the aim of two new studies. The Family Child Care Quality Studies are investigating how variations in the quality of family child care affect children's development and the effects of training on the quality of family child care settings (Families and Work Institute, 1991a & 1991b; 1992).

A recent national study examined the interaction of costs, quality, child outcomes, and policy influences in a sample of 100 non-profit and for-profit child care centers in four states. Observers rated quality in most centers as from poor to mediocre, with almost half of infants and toddlers in rooms with less than minimal quality. The study also found that children who live in states with higher regulatory standards receive higher quality care. (Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Team, 1995).

Confirming earlier findings on staff education and training, many studies have found that formal schooling and specialized training result in more attentive and nurturing behavior by staff (Berk, 1985; Peters & Kostelnick, 1981; Arnett, 1986; Howes, 1983; Ruopp et al., 1979; Feeney & Chun, 1985; Phyfe-Perkins, 1981; Love, Ryer & Faddis, 1992). The National Child Care Staffing Study examined relationships among child care staff, their working conditions and the quality of center-based child care. Their findings reveal that the quality of most centers was barely adequate, and that children in lower quality centers with more staff turnover were less competent in language and social development. Despite higher levels of education than the U.S. workforce in general, child care teachers earn very low wages which have actually decreased by over 20% in ten years while staff turnover rates have tripled in the same period. (Whitebook, Howes and Phillips, 1989, Whitebook, Phillips & Howes, 1993).

RESEARCH ON PARENT EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Parallelling the development of programs and research on classroom-based early childhood programs are initiatives that can best be labeled "family-oriented early childhood intervention programs". Aimed at a similar target group of low-income children and families, such programs seek to promote attentive parenting, parent's personal development, child development and learning by providing information, social support, and some direct services to families.

The first distinct strand of family-oriented early childhood intervention programs, in the 1960s, was premised on the notion that maternal socialization and early teaching strategies, particularly in low-income black, families, failed to prepare their children for school. Programs generally focused on teaching mothers how to structure the home environment, and interact with their young children in more cognitively stimulating and socially appropriate ways. As was true for outcome studies of center-based programs, evaluations generally found positive short-term outcomes, but a more mixed pattern of effects over the longer term. For example, Gray & Klaus found program-favoring effects on the quality of the home environment and maternal teaching style in the Early Training Project; and Lambie, Bond, & Weikart on the "supportiveness" of maternal verbal behavior with the child in the Ypsilanti-Carnegie Infant Education Program. Over the longer term, studies of the Florida Parent Education Program (Gordon, 1967), the Early Training Project (Gray & Klaus, 1968), and the Mother-Child Home Program (Levenstein, 1971) all found evidence of long-term program-favoring effects on children's school careers, as measured by promotion, special education placement, and high school graduation. However, in a similar initiative, the Ypsilanti-Carnegie Program, (Epstein & Weikart, 1979) researchers found no residual program effects on parent-child interaction or child outcomes five years after the program had ended.

The more recent Prenatal and Early Infancy Project (PEIP) provided intensive, continuous, individualized home visits for poor, unmarried mothers, beginning prenatally, can promote enhanced child development and adult personal development. Participants were more likely to engage in positive parenting behaviors and were less likely to have abused or neglected their children. Two years after the intervention ended, participants returned to school more rapidly after the baby's birth, were employed for more time, and had fewer subsequent pregnancies. (Olds, Henderson, Tatelbaum, and Chamberlin, 1988a). More mixed outcomes were observed in seven Ford Foundation Fair Start projects, which assisted low-income mothers during the first two years of their child's life through a home visitation strategy. (Larner, et.al.,1992).

Programs combining parent support and child development services

Two federal demonstration programs in the 1970s, the Parent Child Development Centers (PCDCs) and the Child and Family Resource Programs (CFRPs), provided a mix of child development-focused intervention, and multi-faceted family support (ranging from health and social services, to meals, transportation, and adult basic education). The PCDC evaluation found significant program-favoring effects on such maternal behaviors as emotional responsiveness, affectionateness, praise, appropriate control, and encouragement of child verbalization (Andrews, et al., 1982) and on children's I.Q. at ages 2 and 3. The CFRP evaluation found positive effects on use of community resources, maternal self-reported control of events, and participation in job training. However, there were only very modest program-favoring effects on parental teaching skills, and no child development effects (Travers, Nauta, & Irwin, 1982).

Four other initiatives have explored the feasibility and effects of combining parent-focused and child development strategies:

- The Family Development Research Program provided a full-day developmental program for children from 6 months to 5 years, weekly parenting-focused home visits prenatally to age 5, nutrition, health and social services. The research team found a program-favoring effect on I.Q. at 36 months that disappeared by 60 months. (Lally & Honig, 1977).

- The Yale Child Welfare Research Project (Seitz, Rosenbaum, & Apfel, 1985) provided an individually tailored mix of family support services to 18 families from birth to 30 months of age. In a 10-year follow-up, program boys had less need for remedial services in school than control boys; program children generally had better attendance records and program families were functioning better in a number of spheres. Program mothers reported that they had more pleasurable and involved relationships with their children. All the program families, as opposed to half the control families, were self-supporting; participants were more likely to delay subsequent childbearing and to seek additional education.

- The Brookline Early Education Project (BEEP) provided a diagnostic program to detect early health or developmental problems, parent education and support, and educational services for children through play groups and a pre-kindergarten program. BEEP's evaluation showed that, at kindergarten entry, BEEP participants were more advanced in measures of social skills and use of time. Teacher ratings in second grade indicated that BEEP parents were more likely to initiate contacts with teachers concerning their child's progress (Pierson, et al., 1983).

- The Infant Health and Development Project served families with low-birthweight infants with pediatric follow-up, weekly home visits, bi-monthly parent support groups, and a full-day child development program. Intervention children had significantly higher IQ scores and significantly lower maternally reported behavior problems, but no difference in serious health problems. (Infant Health and Development Program, 1990)

Project CARE was developed to contrast effects of intensive educational day care plus family education, and family education without the day care component. Ongoing evaluation showed that at each year through 54 months, the group of children that received day care plus family education were significantly higher on measures of intellectual development (Bryant, personal communication). Program mothers also reported reduced levels of stressful life events and more supportive interactions with others in the community (Ramey, Bryant, Sparling, and Wasik, 1985).

The federally funded Comprehensive Child Development Program (CCDP), begun in 1989, reflects many of the lessons from these studies. The CCDPs serve children from birth through school entry, provide a comprehensive range of services and strategies to children and parents. The first year evaluation report reveals that CCDPs were successfully providing participants with the core services, although the majority of project sites had difficulty meeting families' needs for accessible, affordable child care (Hubbell, et al., 1991). A subsequent progress report after two years of operation showed modest positive impacts of the program on participants' education/job training participation, use of community resources, parenting, and some aspects of child development and provided data on average annual program costs of $8243 per family. (Comprehensive Child Development Program Interim Report to Congress, 1995).

Another growing federal program initiative is the Even Start Program which links adult literacy, parent education and early childhood services. Initial evaluation findings include positive outcomes in adult literacy, increased parental expectations regarding the children's schooling, but only mixed evidence of effects on parenting practices and parental employment. (St. Pierre, et.al.,1995)

RESEARCH ON PUBLIC POLICY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Public School Early Childhood Study (PSECS), the first national study of public school-based prekindergarten programs, included a descriptive study of state initiatives, a survey of 1225 school districts, and case studies of thirteen public school programs. It found that schools operating a wide variety of types of programs from Chapter I prekindergartens to Head Start to child care for fee-paying parents. The overall quality of programs varied widely with the most glaring lacks were in the area of multicultural materials and activities, attention to children's physical development and provision of comprehensive services. (Mitchell, Seligson and Marx, 1989).

Information from two linked national studies--the National Child Care Survey and the Profile of Child Care Settings--provided the first detailed picture of the supply and demand for early childhood programs since early 1970s. These new studies focus on both employed and non-employed mothers. The consumer study provides information on child care usage patterns, parent satisfaction, search methods and conceptions of quality for all mothers with a special substudy of low-income households (Hofferth, et al., 1991). The supply study includes data on the incidence of various forms of child care and operational details such as group size, staffing patterns and turnover (Kisker, et al., 1991).

·The National Observational Study of Early Childhood Programs compared classroom practices in 150 settings in Head Start, school-based and other community-based child care programs. Using a variety of observational measures, the study found substantial similarity across program types, but a higher proportion of Head Start classrooms rated overall as good quality, and a higher proportion of child care centers as minimal in quality. (Layzer, et.al.)

Several projects have examined the issue of continuity between and among the various programs a child attends over time - most notably the evaluation of Project Developmental Continuity, a Head Start Demonstration (Bond and Rosario, 1982) and a more recent national study of program practices related to transitions between preschool and kindergarten. The latter study found that only 13% of school had formal policies on transition, although schools and early childhood programs reported substantial differences in practices related to instruction and parent involvement. (Love, Logue, Trudeau & Thayer, 1992).

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) has completed a variety of studies of the effects of federal and state funding and policy in programs for young children and their parents, such as:

> - Two major studies of federal and state child care policies revealed (Adams, 1990; Blank, 1994) substantial gaps and problems in regulation of centers and homes serving young children. An estimated 43% of children in out-of-home care attend settings which are exempt from regulation or inspection, due to a variety of exemptions. In addition, standards are inconsistent from state to state and fall far short of meeting recommendations of professional organizations in a number of instances. For example, as of 1990, 19 states allowed child care centers to operate with five or more infants per adult. Related research on state policies for training and certification of staff members and managers of child care centers revealed a similar pattern of problems. For example, in 36 states, teachers in child care centers were not required to be trained or certified before being employed. (Morgan, et.al.,1993)
>
> - A study of state prekindergarten initiatives which have expanded to 32 states, with funding of roughly $665 million to serve nearly 290,000 children (Adams & Sandford, 1994). The study also revealed problems in policies and funding provisions related to the quality and comprehensiveness of these programs in a substantial number of states.

In recent years, the Government Accounting Office has contributed an ongoing series of reports on early childhood services, including studies of levels of need and participation rates in programs (U.S. Government Accounting Office, May, 1994; July, 1993), the costs and availability of comprehensive, high quality programs (U.S. Government Accounting Office, July, 1989, March, 1995), and relationships between varied federal programs and funding streams (U.S. Government Accounting Office, October, 1994).

Finally, the environment for policymaking in early childhood reflects the influence of a variety of task forces and commissions which draw on research findings and issue reports which frequently receive substantial attention from media and political leaders. Examples of this genre of research dissemination and synthesis include the following:

- The National Commission on Children (1991) report recommended increased investment in child care and family support initiatives within its comprehensive agenda of policy changes in income support, health, and education reform.

- The Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children (1994) drew national attention to the special needs and problems of families with infants and toddlers and outlined policy recommendations for child care, health services, and parent support.

- The Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion made recommendations regarding program improvement, approaches to expanding enrollment and diversifying Head Start services, and new partnerships with other human service and education initiatives, including an expansion of research and evaluation efforts.

- The Committee on Economic Development's several reports on early childhood development (Committee on Economic Development 1987, 1991, 1993) have conveyed the endorsement of influential leaders from the private sector on the merits of investment in high quality early care and education services.

- Reports on strategies to achieve the school readiness goal from the National Association of State Boards of Education (1991) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Boyer, 1991) have enhanced the visibility and momentum of early childhood policy development with special attention to the link between early childhood agencies and initiatives to improve kindergarten and primary grade programs in the public schools.

SUMMARY

Over the past three decades the conceptual and theoretical constructs underlying various intervention strategies have evolved. A first wave of programs sought to improve the child's cognitive functioning by providing experiences that essentially substituted for the deficient parent. Another early approach was to train parents/caregivers to alter parenting behaviors to promote cognitive functioning and health. However, in reality, most child-focused programs included some form of parent involvement or education and many of the parent-focused programs provided activities for the child either in the home or in a center-based program. The idea that these foci are mutually reinforcing and that effective programs address both the child and parent is the prevalent view today (Seitz, 1990; Young & Marx, 1992).

The range of expected outcomes from early childhood programs has also tended to broaden over time. The narrowly cognitive focus of early programs gradually gave way to attention to social and emotional well-being as well as physical health for children and improved life outcomes for parents. The range of program effects -- from prenatal health behaviors and enhanced parent-child relationships, to increased economic self-sufficiency, and the prevention of abuse and neglect -- indicates the variety of public policy functions that family support and education programs may be able to fulfill. Most of the long-term evidence relates to more successful social adjustment and school careers for program children. But there is also a growing, albeit still modest, body of data pointing to an improved life course for mothers and better long-term parent-child relationships. In other words, these programs may be uniquely suited to altering the likely life course of two generations. (Weiss, 1988b).

Summarizing the major findings from early educational intervention research, Ramey and Ramey, (1992), identify six principles that characterize programs with the strongest effects.

> **Timing**: Interventions that begin earlier and last longer produce greater benefits.
>
> **Intensity**: Programs that are more intensive in terms of hours per day and days per week produce larger effects than programs that are less intensive.
>
> **Directness**: Interventions that directly provide children with daily learning experiences produce more positive and lasting results than ones which rely on indirect routes such as parent education only or health services only.
>
> **Breadth**: Programs providing comprehensive services and using multiple routes to enhance development produce stronger effects than narrowly focused programs.
>
> **Individual differences**: Children reap different degrees and types of benefits from programs. Greater benefits accrue from programs designed to match the child's learning style and risk conditions.
>
> **Environment**: Initial effects of interventions will diminish unless supportive changes are made and maintained in children's family, community and school environments.

The complexity of delivering a program that focuses simultaneously on child, parent and family; that begins before birth and carries on until the child is well into elementary school; and that is designed to affect all developmental domains is great. The lack of an adequate body of research on these collaborative, multifocused, intensive, comprehensive programs is the most serious limitation of the literature to date.

CHAPTER III: STUDY AIMS AND STUDY QUESTIONS

Research Purposes, Audiences, and Questions
Site Selection and Program Characteristics

III. STUDY AIMS AND QUESTIONS

RESEARCH PURPOSES, AUDIENCES, AND QUESTIONS

This report is the final product of a three-and-one-half year study commissioned by the Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. The OERI initiated eleven similar field research projects to examine significant education reform strategies in areas such as student assessment, parent and community involvement, uses of technology, teacher professionalism, and early childhood services. Each study was designed to document and analyze significant local examples of innovative and successful implementation of reforms, towards the purpose of assisting other communities involved in tackling similar problems:

> "The purpose of this procurement is to take stock of those efforts -- to trace out the lessons that others can learn from pioneers in this field -- to identify the key incentives for, and barriers to, education reform, both in schools and other sites, and in the larger policy environment. To accomplish this objective, this work must move beyond mere description of models to investigate the circumstances that encouraged and permitted model sites to implement constructive reforms, and to describe to others how they can affect their own circumstances so they, too, can improve education in their respective jurisdictions."

This study was particularly designed to provide useful information to early childhood **practitioners** who work directly with children and families, **managers** who direct early childhood agencies and programs, and **policymakers** who make decisions about program designs and funding strategies. Case study methodology is particularly appropriate for creating descriptive accounts of front-line practice and local management which can be helpful to practitioners in other communities. Case studies also offer the potential to illustrate how state and federal policies and mandates influence the practices and effectiveness of local programs. Accordingly, the central purposes for this examination of early childhood strategies are as follows:

1. To describe innovative, effective local strategies for serving young children and their parents and contributing to assuring that participants are prepared for success when they enter elementary school.

2. To analyze key factors in the design and implementation of these programs.

3. To describe how state and federal policies support or inhibit successful management and front-line service strategies.

4. To provide recommendations to early childhood practitioners and policymakers on how to create more high quality early childhood programs.

Case study research is appropriate to studies of an exploratory and explanatory nature. The research study sought to better understand the development, implementation, and impacts of early childhood initiatives. As an **exploratory study**, the key research questions in each phase of early childhood program development were:

- **Design**: How do successful program directors work to get early childhood programs adopted and funded? What strategies are linked to higher quality services, more comprehensive and responsive operations, and greater ability to assist and support young children and their parents?

- **Implementation**: What are the problems and problem-solving strategies found in each case situation? How does a program develop in practice over time?

- **Impact**: How does the program keep track of outcomes and what results, if any, have been accomplished?

As an **explanatory study** the study sought to determine the ways local, internal, and external forces shape program development. This ecological approach framed our research questions thus:

- How do community conditions (demographics, economics, community resources) encourage or hinder the development of comprehensive early childhood services?

- How does program leadership impact the development and sustainability of an early childhood initiative?

- How does the larger policy environment interact with program implementation?

SITE SELECTION AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

To answer these questions, our research team completed seven case studies of exemplary local early childhood strategies. Programs were selected based on nominations from a large group of national experts and state administrators involved with child care, Head Start, school-based, and parent-centered early childhood programs. We selected seven local programs, with careful attention to assuring certain common features and maximum variation on other attributes.

Based on analysis of research literature, each initiative shared the following features, to allow for fruitful comparative analysis of practice and policy implications:

- All agencies were recognized for exemplary levels of quality and innovative approaches to serving children and families.

- All agencies serve children from low- to moderate-income families, where a variety of risk factors are present which create difficulties for children's healthy development and school readiness.

- All agencies exhibit a strong commitment to working with parents and families as key clients and partners, as well as providing high quality early childhood education experiences for children.

- Every program works with one or more state or federal agencies as a dominant source of funding and policy.

The seven programs are as follows:

- **Child Development, Inc. (CDI) in Russelville, Arkansas** is a Head Start grantee which provides comprehensive services in a variety of ways to families in rural communities, including home-based programs, prekindergarten and child care services, and special initiatives for teen parents, participants in Arkansas's welfare reform initiative, and families in need of literacy or employment training.

- **Inn Circle, Inc. in Cedar Rapids, Iowa** is a Head Start-based initiative to serve homeless, single parents with young children in a residential facility -- combining child care services with education, employment, and community-building services for families.

- **Sheltering Arms, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia** combines family support and child care services to low income and working families, using an innovative blend of funding from the United Way, corporations, state and federal child care programs, and fees from parents.

- **The Parent Services Project (PSP) in Fairfax, California** is a national strategy to infuse family support and involvement principles and services into local child care and early childhood agencies.

- **James E. Biggs Early Childhood Center in Covington, Kentucky** is an innovative partnership between a local school district and a non-profit child care agency, working together to manage a prekindergarten, family support, and home visitation strategy.

- **Jersey City, New Jersey's Early Childhood Program** is a comprehensive early childhood program in an urban school district, beginning with a prekindergarten program and including a curriculum and staff development initiative in kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms.

- **Family and Child Education (FACE) in New Mexico** is a national initiative of the Bureau of Indian Affairs which combines three research-based strategies (Parents As Teachers, Family Literacy, and the High/Scope curriculum) to provide Native American families with home-based parent education, adult literacy services, and a prekindergarten classroom program.

As highlighted in Table 1, agencies differ in terms of the type of community served (including urban, rural, small city, and suburban populations), the sponsoring organization (Head Start grantees, public school districts, non-profit child care agencies), and the size of the initiative (ranging from multi-million dollar operations in Child Development, Inc. and Sheltering Arms, Inc. to a single local center in Covington, Kentucky). We included programs which have been started relatively recently and agencies with long histories. Finally, while the majority of the case studies describe operations in a single local community, we included two projects (the Parent Services Project and Family and Child Education) which are tackling the challenge of "going to scale" by implementing a common strategy across a wide range of different communities.

This study design and this set of program sites distinguish this report from most recent analysis of early childhood services and policy. First, the study design is unusual for its breadth of analysis of the connections among front-line practice strategies, agency management and leadership, and the influences of public funding and policy. Most research tends to concentrate either on issues of direct teaching and family service practice or on policy analysis. Second, the site selection is unusual because it provides broad coverage across the range of organizations active in providing early childhood services. It complements major lines of past research which has looked at programs within a single form of agency or strategy, such as public-school-based early childhood programs, Head Start, parent education and family support programs, or child care.

TABLE 1

CASE STUDY SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Program	Auspices	Location	Population Served	# of Children	Ages of Children	Annual Budget	Funding Sources	Core Services
Child Development, Inc. Russellville, AR	Head Start	Rural	Low income, working families	2,000	0-5 yrs	$6.1 million	Head Start & 14 other public & private sources	Home-based; part-day & full-day classes; teen parent & family literacy programs
Inn Circle, Inc. Cedar Rapids, IA	Head Start	Small city	Homeless, single parents	50	0-4	$745,000	HUD, Head Start & other public & private sources	Child care & family support in a residential facility
Sheltering Arms Atlanta, GA	Child Care Agency	Urban	Working families	833	0-5	$4.4 million	United Way; multiple public & private sources	Child care & family support
Parent Services Project Fairfax, CA	Child Care Agency	Urban, suburbs rural	Working families	15,000 in five states	0-8	$300-$400 per family	Foundations, multiple public and & private sources	Child care & family support
James E. Biggs Early Childhood Center Covington, KY	School District	Small city	Low income families	262	3-4	$775,000	State Depts. of Education & Human Resources	Preschool, home visit & family support
Early Childhood Program Jersey City, NJ	School District	Urban	Low income	409	3-4	$2 million	Local school district; State Dept of Ed	Preschool and primary grade reform
Family and Child Education New Mexico	Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools	Rural	Low income Native American	471 in 22 sites	0-4	$285,000 per site	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Home-based parent education, preschool & adult literacy

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CHAPTER III: CASE STUDY SUMMARIES

IV. CASE STUDY SUMMARIES

The following program profiles are designed to provide additional background information on the characteristics and innovative features of the seven case study sites. Each profile highlights five key attributes of services and organizational strategy:

- **Organization** - Agency structure, governance, and staffing.

- **Funding** - Annual budget levels and sources of revenue.

- **Services for children** - Forms of educational and support services.

- **Family support and involvement** - Strategies for parent education, social & health services, and participation in peer support and governance activities.

- **Collaboration** - Mechanisms for working with other community agencies and organizations in serving children and families.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT, INC. - RUSSELLVILLE, ARKANSAS

The largest Head Start agency in Arkansas, Child Development, Inc. (CDI) serves 2000 children in 11 rural counties through a combination of centers, family day care homes, and home-based staff. CDI has expanded rapidly by obtaining funding from a wide variety of public and private sources. CDI offers a wide range of services to meet the needs of children and families, but it is a complex challenge for leaders to manage such a large number of separate programs and funding sources.

Organization

CDI's governing board of 23 business, political and community leaders sets priorities for future program development. The Head Start Policy Council, composed of parents and community representatives from each local center, approves all major decisions on Head Start operations, such as staff hiring and firing, the annual budget, and major shifts in program services. CDI manages a staff of over 300 people through a combination of local center directors, and central office supervisors.

Funding

CDI manages a complex set of funding sources, including eighteen different federal, and state programs, such as Head Start ($1,875,365), parent fees for child care ($343,218), child care vouchers ($259,309), and Even Start ($245,671). Agency leaders work to assure compliance with each set of program mandates, while pursuing a goal of a coherent continuum of services, rather than a series of separate, categorical programs. Staff members work within a single career ladder and compensation system. However, differences in rates of reimbursement between Head Start and child care voucher funding sources, which prevent CDI from providing equal salaries for all teaching staff.

Services for Children

CDI's diverse forms of funding support services to children from birth through school-age in part-day and full-day/full-year classrooms. Offering child care services to working parents on a sliding fee scale meets a key community need and assures more diversity in participating families and children. Children are grouped by age and not by the type of funding which supports their participation. Staff participate in ongoing professional development activities, including the Child Development Associate credential program.

Family Support and Involvement

Parents in all CDI programs are encouraged to volunteer in classrooms and participate in parent education programs, policy committees, and parent-teacher conferences. Home-based programs are a significant segment of CDI programming, providing more intensive, intimate interaction between staff members and families. CDI also helps parents make progress on educational and employment goals. For example, a Parent Child Center program serves 60 parents who participate in adult education and Job Training Partnership Act employment. A Teen Parent Program serves infants and toddlers of low-income mothers who are enrolled in vocational or adult education.

Collaboration

CDI has negotiated transition agreements with local school districts to facilitate transfer of records on children when they enter kindergarten, joint CDI-school staff development programs, and meetings and observation of classrooms by CDI and public school teachers. CDI collaborates with area education agencies in serving young children with disabilities. Other CDI partnerships connect

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parents with welfare, adult education, and job training agencies. Public health agencies provide resources for immunizations, and physical exams.

INN CIRCLE, INC. - CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

Inn-Circle is a "two-generational" early childhood strategy which combines child care with strategies to help parents become self-sufficient and reintegrated into the community. The local Head Start program works in partnership with a transitional housing facility for forty-four formerly homeless single mothers and their children. In addition to education classes, employment training, case management, health care, and counseling services, Inn Circle helps residents develop peer support skills, participate in decisionmaking and service activities, and engage with local neighborhood institutions and associations.

Organization

The Inn-Circle staff of 20 includes a director, early childhood teachers and aides, counselors, and activity coordinators. Staffed by two nurses and one volunteer, a Well Child Clinic run by the Visiting Nurses Association is located at Inn-Circle. Though some Inn-Circle policies are set by HUD, a Resident Council and a series of parent committees determines day-to-day living policies and services such as security, maintenance and facilities, and the after-school programs.

Funding

Inn-Circle operates with an annual budget of $645,000, most of which is funded through HUD's Supplemental Assistance to Facilities to Assist the Homeless. Other monies come from state emergency shelter funds, Head Start, the Iowa Department of Public Health, WIC, and the United Way. Residents contribute one-third of their gross income for rent. In addition, local companies and organizations sponsor the renovation and maintenance of residential units at Inn-Circle with donations of cash and volunteer time.

Services for Children

Inn-Circle houses a Head Start program for thirty-two three- and four-year olds from resident families as well as from low-income working families in the neighborhood. Classrooms are open 7-5 to provide extended child care for working parents. There are toddler and infant rooms to care for 18 younger children, and after school care is available for children in kindergarten to sixth grade. Head Start staff conduct three home visits a year which focus on the child's educational and the family's needs as a whole. Teachers have worked to adjust their expectations and routines to accommodate the special social and emotional needs of children from homeless families.

Family Support and Involvement

Inn-Circle encourages its residents to take responsibility for running the facility and determining the services they need. Parents run parent meetings and volunteer in the community; serve on committees and make decisions regarding the management of Inn-Circle; establish support groups around their needs, such as narcotics anonymous, a domestic violence support group, and a self-esteem group; and organize social events, such as birthday parties for children. Parents are invited to work with teachers to write their child's Individual Education Plan for kindergarten and to volunteer in classrooms. Inn-Circle staff help parents engage in mandated education and job training programs.

Collaboration

A partnership with Community Colleges allows teachers to provide children with supplemental instruction, a local hospital has brokered a Well Child Clinic on the Inn-Circle premises, and the Kirkwood Community College conducts vocational testing, GED, and adult education for mothers.

SHELTERING ARMS, INC. - ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Sheltering Arms manages eleven child care centers which provide eleven-hour-per-day, year-round care for 833 children from birth to age five. Since its inception in 1888 as a Methodist Church sewing circle providing clothing for "street children", Sheltering Arms has focussed on assisting families with multiple challenges of parenting, employment, and limited resources. Each Sheltering Arms center provides affordable high-quality, child care and offers family support services for parents. The agency has evolved from a private charity, to a solely- United Way-supported organization, to an innovative venture which melds funding from public, corporate, voluntary agencies and parent fees.

Organization

Each center offers services for 75-90 children through a team of teachers, a Director, a Family Service Coordinator, and an Instructional Lead Teacher. Parents and community members serve on Center Advisory Committees which filter information and concerns to and from a Board of Directors which addresses fund-raising, advocacy, plans for expansion, and other policy issues. An in-house training organization, IN TRAINING, provides workshops for teachers, leading to certification via the Child Development Associate credential, a competency-based early childhood certificate. IN TRAINING also provides workshops and consulting services to over 120 other early childhood agencies in the region.

Funding

Sheltering Arms's annual budget of $4.3 million includes public funding from child care vouchers, a Department of Education prekindergarten initiative and the Child Care Food Program; private sector funds from the United Way, 64 local businesses and 26 foundations; and parent fees for child care services. Over 1000 parents and community residents contribute volunteer time each year. Sheltering Arms also initiated a partnership which raised $150,000 from businesses to increase the state's capacity to obtain federal matching funds for child care, leading to $400,000 in additional services.

Services for Children

Classroom programs for six-week to five-year-olds are theme-oriented and activity-based. Each staff member works with a "primary bonding group" of children throughout the year, to increase individual attention and nurturing and to provide a focal point for ongoing assessment and communication with parents. The quality of Sheltering Arms classes has been documented by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Center Accreditation Program.

Family Support and Involvement

Family Service Coordinators organize parent education programs, assess needs of families, and connect them with community agencies. Workshops on financial management, housing, nutrition, basic child development and parenting are provided on a regular basis. Parent/teacher conferences held twice a year allow parents to discuss their child's development and their observations of the program. Informal support networks for parents allow them to discuss common concerns and share ideas. Parents also volunteer, raise funds, and serve on committees.

Collaboration

Family Service Coordinators help parents gain access to health care, battered women's shelters, free winter coats, and homes through the Habitat for Humanity program. The Atlanta Speech School conducts speech and hearing screenings; the Institute for Family-Centered Services provides workshops and family counseling; and the Adaptive Learning Center offers programs for children with special needs from infancy through age six. Staff also participate in several interagency planning efforts to assess overall needs for early childhood and health services.

THE PARENT SERVICES PROJECT - FAIRFAX, CALIFORNIA

The Parent Services Project (PSP) in Fairfax, California, provides preventive outreach and support services for economically-pressed families with young children. Guided by the belief that parental empowerment leads to healthy family functioning, PSP helps staff in early childhood centers to become more responsive and effective in their frequent and long-term connections with families.

Organization

The PSP project was launched in 1980 as a partnership between the San Francisco and Zellerbach Family Foundations. Four local child care agencies were funded to provide outreach, training and social support to help parents, many of whom are recent immigrants, become less socially isolated, and more competent in meeting their work, family, and parenting roles. Since 1980, PSP has grown from a four-site pilot project in Northern California to a national training and dissemination center with replication sites in five states, including center-based and family day care home child care, Head Start, and public school-based programs.

Funding

The original cadre of PSP centers were supported by private foundations, who also funded the development of materials, training strategies, and an independent impact evaluation of the pilot strategy. PSP leaders persuaded the California state legislature to pass legislation to fund PSP programs throughout the state, but the bills were vetoed by the Governor. PSP operational and training services are funded by local and national foundations, United Way and corporate charities, and various family -centered prevention-oriented government programs. PSP estimates average annual costs of $300-$400 per family for core services of a Family Support Coordinator, respite child care, and social and educational activities.

Services for Children

PSP child care centers are year-round, ten- to twelve-hour a day operations that nurture, stimulate and educate children from birth through elementary school ages.

Family Support and Involvement

PSP child care centers are a focal point for social support for parents from their peers as well as from professional staff. Parents have access services such as respite child care, Even Start literacy classes and GED training, empowerment opportunities, workshops, and classes. Parents conduct many of their own workshops on computers literacy, ESL, adjusting to the new culture and economy of the United States. Social and recreational activities, such as family picnics and outings, and cooking and gardening groups, help reduce stress and encourage supportive network-building. Parents participate in decisionmaking about program activities and manage small, discretionary budgets, such as a $2000 revolving loan fund.

Collaboration

PSP centers collaborate with area family and children's service agencies to exchange information and referrals and to plan expansions and improvements in service strategies. Projects draw on local community agencies to address other family needs, such as for health services, affordable housing, literacy, and employment, and training. Several PSP sites also collaborate with local school districts to extend family support strategies for parents of school-aged children.

THE JAMES E. BIGGS EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER - COVINGTON, KENTUCKY

The Biggs Center provides a prekindergarten program, family support services and a home visitation strategy. It came into being through a creative school district/community agency partnership via funding provided in Kentucky's Educational Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) for preschool and family support services.

Organization

The Biggs Center is a partnership between Children, Inc., a nonprofit childcare agency and the Covington School District. Children, Inc. recruits, hires, trains, and supervises a staff of 15; monitors the curriculum; implements parenting activities; and conducts program evaluations. The school district made a major investment in the facility and contributes maintenance, transportation and administrative services to the project.

Funding

Funds come from state department of education preschool program ($436,435), Special Education ($204,033), Chapter 1 ($83,563), Family Resource and Youth Service Centers ($47,200). The school district contributed $1.8 million to purchase, renovate, and equip the facility and playground space. Mini-grants from the business sector and state agencies cover special enrichment activities.

Services for Children

The preschool program operates two half-day sessions, Monday through Thursday, and accommodates its 262 children in classrooms of 20. 15 children with special needs participate in the program, with support from a specialist and seven assistant teachers. On Fridays, teachers and assistant teachers conduct home visits. Through Chapter 1 funds, three-year-old children are visited twice a month at home by a teacher and teaching aide who combine elements of the High/Scope and the Parents as Teachers curricula.

Family Support and Involvement

Parents are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning as well as in their own development. Staff provide parents with games and learning packets to supplement classroom activities, ask parents for feedback on the appropriateness of the materials, and invite families to social events at the Center, such as Dad's Night and Mom's Make-over. Over 100 parents annually participate in a training program to prepare them to assist teachers as classroom volunteers. The Center records over 2000 days of volunteer time per year from this component. The Family Resource Center connects families with local services to meet housing, parenting, health, employment, and education needs. Parents participate in GED classes, JOBS workshops on career skills, and a personal safety program. Parents serve on the Family Resource Center Advisory Council, where they work with school staff and community members to make recommendations for the following year's budget and grant applications.

Collaboration

The Biggs Center has contracts with the Northern Kentucky District Health Department to provide children's medical and dental services; Committee for Kids, Inc., which provides a Nurturing Program for families with children aged 4-12; and the Northern Kentucky University Reentry Center for JOBS workshops.

THE JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY, EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Jersey City's school district-based early childhood initiative has expanded from an initial state-funded program for 150 children to a program serving 400 children, with the majority of resources provided from local education agency funds. The program has thrived during a period of a state-imposed takeover of the school district operations and budget.

Organization

The school district uses resources from the state Goodstarts Program and local district resources to implement prekindergarten programs in elementary school buildings. All families in the community are eligible to enroll their children in the locally-funded classrooms; selection is determined by a highly publicized lottery. Two administrators share responsibility for program management, staff development for prekindergarten and primary grade staff members and teacher evaluations.

Funding

A total budget of approximately $2.75 million per years includes an estimated contribution of $1.8 million from local school district resources as well as funding from federal (Even Start, Chapter 1), and state department of education programs.

Services for Children

The faculty-student ratio is 2:15 in the three- and 2:18 in the four-year-old classes, where teachers implement the High/Scope curriculum. The CASPER (Child Care After-School Program for Enrichment and Recreation) after-school program runs from 8 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. and emphasizes educational activities such as music, dance, and drama. Jersey City has adopted a developmentally appropriate framework for classroom practice and professional development from prekindergarten through second grade, an approach which enhances continuity for young children and their families. Most children move from prekindergarten classes into kindergarten classes in the same schools, thus easing the transition for both students and their families.

Family Support and Involvement

Parents may engage in their children's education by volunteering, observing, or working in classrooms; chaperoning outings; and reading material regarding the health and development of children in the resource rooms. Parents attend quarterly conferences to discuss their children's progress. GED programs; fairs on job education, health education, and nutrition; and an annual family picnic round out the range of services. A voluntary parenting education program holds weekly meetings, where parents support each other around problems in participating in their children's education. The Goodstarts Policy Advisory Committee is composed of parents/guardians of children and representatives of community agencies.

Collaboration

The Jersey City Inter-Agency Collaborative Council works to increase the accessibility of social and community services for students and families. The prekindergarten program collaborates with St.

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Peter's and Jersey City State Colleges which send student teachers to intern at the early childhood sites, as well as with the Jersey City Health Center and the University of Medicine and Dentistry which provide health screenings, physical exams, and dental services. Program managers work with the local Head Start agency to coordinate recruitment and location of program sites.

FAMILY AND CHILD EDUCATION

The Family and Child Education (FACE) program offers early childhood education and family support to Native Americans. Sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) through the Office of Indian Education, FACE operates in 22 BIA schools and serves 471 families nationally.

Organization

The BIA in Washington, DC, administers the FACE program, setting policy regarding staffing, curriculum, and funding. A project officer oversees the sites, while local schools hire staff, allocate their monies, and design recruitment, class schedules, and educational activities. Local FACE Coordinators oversee day-to-day operations, working with school principals to supervise a staff composed of home visitors, an early childhood education teacher, a classroom aide, and an adult education teacher. The BIA contracts Parents as Teachers National Center and the National Center for Family Literacy to provide extensive training and technical assistance to individual sites as well as to monitor program quality.

Funding

The BIA provides school sites with $285,000 annually for their operations, including substantial allocations for training and technical assistance and a national evaluation study. Some local sites have augmented this funding with resources from other federal sources.

Services for Children

Programs operate eleven months out of the year. The two major components are the home-based Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum for parents of children from birth to three years of age; and a center-based family literacy program for three- and four-year old children whose parents need to complete their secondary school education or further their preparation for higher education and employment. The Parents as Teachers component includes weekly home visits and bi-weekly parent group meetings which offer parenting skills, developmental activities for children, and periodic child development screening. In the center-based component, three- or four-year old children attend school for a six hour period, three times a week. These bilingual classes are taught using a High/Scope curriculum. Program continuity is extended by providing training for kindergarten and primary grade teachers in the High/Scope curriculum

Family Support and Involvement

The adult literacy program prepares parents to pass the GED, and offers parent education and life skills training. Staff work with parents to seek further education and in efforts to obtain jobs. Parents join children during their classes to read and play together in what is known as Parent and Child Time (PACT). Special events such as field trips and festivals reinforce Native cultural traditions. Parents also take part in fundraising activities and are represented on Parent Advisory Council to convey their concerns to Program Coordinators and to resolve problems.

Collaboration

Many FACE sites are located in small rural communities, where public services and employment opportunities are lacking. FACE staff members seek to coordinate with local health services, and collaborate with Tribal Councils and the BIA in planning and managing the program.

CHAPTER V - CROSS-SITE ANALYSIS

Strategies to Support Child Development
Strategies to Serve and Involve Families
Management Strategies:
    Fundraising and Building High Quality Services
Policy Influences in Local Agencies

V. CROSS-SITE ANALYSIS

This chapter will analyze strategies across the seven case studies in a "bottom-up" sequence, beginning with innovative approaches in serving children and families, moving to local program management strategies, and concluding with analysis of how state and federal policies influence local program organization and services:

- **Strategies to Support Child Development** - This section describes the context and strategies of teachers in working with children, parents, and public schools.

- **Strategies to Serve and Involve Families** - This section analyzes strategies of programs in supporting parents and families towards the goals of effective parenting, economic and educational advancement, obtaining health and social services, and creating connections with community and neighborhood institutions.

- **Management Strategies: Fundraising and Building High Quality Services** - This section synthesizes findings about how administrators lead and manage innovative local programs. We portray agency managers as crucial mediators between the world of public policy and funding sources and the daily work of staff members.

- **Policy Influences in Local Agencies** - This section describes how current state and federal policies influence organization and services in these seven local initiatives.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Policymakers support funding early childhood strategies because of the benefits of influencing healthy child development and contributing to early school success of children. Early childhood programs spend the majority of their resources and staff time working with infants, toddlers and preschool children. Even when early childhood agencies work with parents, a dominant underlying goal is to enhance benefits to children. For all of these reasons, we focus in this section on how these seven initiatives carry out their function of educating and caring for children. We begin by commenting on the context of early childhood classrooms and teaching practice, followed by discussion of five significant innovative strategies observed in these seven initiatives.

Context: Child-Centered Classrooms Which Bridge the Worlds of Home and School

Early childhood classrooms occupy a special place in the educational careers of students and families. They are the first place where children come to learn outside of their homes -- and the last place where children are taught before they begin kindergarten. This situation creates special opportunities and challenges for teachers to work with families and with schools as they teach and nurture the development of young children.

Early childhood programs and teachers have multiple and powerful connections with parents and families. In many child care centers, staff nurture infants as young as a few months of age -- doing what parents would do for their babies if parents were not employed. A major priority for these teachers is reassuring parents about the safety of their children, and dealing with parents' anxieties and questions, as one teacher observed:

> "The majority of parents with children in the infant room are first-time parents. We take children as young as six-weeks old and you pass out a lot of tissues on that first

> day when parents have to separate from the baby. We tell them they can call us as often as they want to check on their child, and in the beginning that phone is ringing!"

Parents have a significant presence in early childhood classrooms and centers in a variety of other ways. In contrast to K-12 education, attendance is voluntary in early childhood programs, families often have a choice about where they send their child, and parental fees are a major source of revenue in many agencies. Teachers also look forward to family members contributing to programs as classroom volunteers on a regular basis. And the proximity of early childhood education to children's home environment creates special burdens and opportunities to respond to the language, values, routines, and expectations of families. For all these reasons, early childhood practice involves significant engagement with families and parents.

However, while teachers collaborate with parents, early childhood classrooms are very different from children's home environment. Early childhood teachers introduce children to living and learning in groups, via the guidance of a professional, rather than a family member. While at home, children learn by interchange with relatives and they are nearly always the only person of their own age, early childhood programs are social environments with very different features. Classroom life demands that students learn to share space, time, materials, and attention from adults; and to work and play with a sizeable group of other children. Indeed, this social curriculum of early childhood classrooms may be their most crucial way of promoting school readiness.

Early childhood agencies complete their work as they hand over children and families to public schools. This change is cause for celebration in many respects. Teachers and parents share pride in how far children have come in their physical growth, language and social skills, and self-confidence. Children are excited about their opportunity to attend "big school". This transition is also a value-laden and emotional event. Teachers and family service staff members who have worked hard to create powerful bonds with families need to disengage. Families who have moved from strangers to participants and leaders in a neighborhood center must adjust to participating in a public school.

Issues of school readiness and transitions are a particular dilemma for teachers, because they frequently see major conflicts between the expectations and practices of kindergarten teachers and the way things work in early childhood classrooms. For example, early childhood classrooms reflect the premise that each child has his or her own pace and style of learning. However, as children move to kindergarten, they are often exposed to more rigid conceptions of what constitutes learning, and what standards of behavior are appropriate in a classroom setting. Children who are used to the flexibility of preschool now run the risk of becoming labeled "behavior problems", as noted by several teachers:

> "We try to stir up the love of learning in children and hopefully it transfers. But I've seen some kids who are turned off to learning by their kindergarten teacher. Many kindergartens have the same kind of interest centers we do, but in other schools, it's 'sit in your assigned seats and do your work!'"
>
> "I hear a lot of frustration from our teachers. They say schools are still using sticker reward systems and putting kids in a corner. A former teacher with us is now working in kindergarten and she says all they do is dittos -- there's nothing which is hands-on."

Along with concern about children's transition to school, both staff members and parents expressed a mixture of sadness and frustration about the radical changes in parent involvement as families move from early childhood centers into public schools. In early childhood programs, parents are regarded as key partners, their participation is eagerly sought, and programs offer a range of health, family support, and social services. However, whereas parents and staff used the language of "bonding" to describe each other, this was replaced with formality and distance when it comes to school-family relations. A common sentiment among parents and staff was that public schools fail to sustain a positive connection with parents. One parent described the stance of public schools in these terms:

> "There are a lot of schools that don't want you to be involved. You cannot just walk into a class to see what's going on. You have to make an appointment."

A child care center administrator added the following comments on this issue:

> "Many of our families move from coming to meetings to taking on leadership roles, to becoming advocates. After they leave us, there's often a total dropoff, because schools are not viewed as welcoming parent involvement. There aren't many evening or weekend activities where you connect with other parents. Teachers leave at 3:30 whereas in PSP you're involved in activities together, and you know a teacher will call you because she needs a ride to a session. So parents become very frustrated."

Relationships with families and with schools can create conflicts for early childhood practitioners. Both parents and elementary schools may take exception to the beliefs and practices of early childhood educators -- and teachers of young children can be critics of some parents and some public school programs. These tensions at the boundaries of early childhood programs impinges on the thinking and practice of teachers as they manage classroom life. Finding ways to address these connections is a difficult practical issue for programs.

Early childhood teachers then craft programs which focus on the attributes of children from birth to age 4, but with an eye towards where children are coming from and where they are moving to. In relating to families and to elementary schools, teachers work out a difficult balance between respect for the strengths of these adjacent environments, a positive partnership, active endeavors to address both transitions, and selective efforts to alter attitudes and practices in the home and elementary school.

We now turn to analysis of five strategies observed across these seven agencies to address these core challenges of working with children, families, and public schools:

1. A ubiquitous commitment to developmentally appropriate practice as a core strategy for classroom environments and instruction.

2. Strategies to respond to the diverse needs of individual children, within a framework of developmentally appropriate practice.

3. Strategies to incorporate parents and family members in the daily life of classrooms.

4. Efforts to prepare children and parents for the transition to elementary schools.

5. Strategies to create greater continuity between early childhood programs and elementary schools.

Strategies with Children, Parents & Public Schools

1. Programs implement a developmentally appropriate approach to classroom environments and instructional practice.

A striking paradox exists between the structural diversity of early childhood agencies and the uniformity of practice in early childhood classrooms. While we deliberately selected agencies with different structural attributes, our visits revealed a highly uniform approach to teaching and classroom environments, characterized by adherence to the tenets of "developmentally appropriate practice" as promulgated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987). Across visits to classrooms in a small trailer on an Indian reservation, a child care center on the ground floor of a modern federal office building in Atlanta, and busy urban elementary schools in New Jersey, we found a striking homogeneity in physical environments, schedules, modes of teaching and activities, and the way teachers talk about their work.

Key elements of this approach include **active learning** via the direct exploration of a variety of materials, as explained by a teacher in one program as follows:

> "When we were children, we did a lot of one-dimensional, rote learning, like coloring a picture of an apple and tracing the letter 'A'. Now if we do a unit on apples, we bring in apples and let children taste them, count them, cut them up, cook them, whatever, so they will not just remember that apple starts with 'A,' but also the tastes, colors, sizes and shapes of different varieties."

A dominant mode of activity is opportunity for children to choose from a variety of **interest centers**, equipped with blocks, books, materials involving numbers and mathematics, puzzles, games, natural science, and housekeeping, as illustrated in the following vignette:

> The children are occupied at the interest centers while the teacher and a male assistant circulate through the room. Small groups of children are building with Legos; matching number shapes in a set of blank squares, working with Cuisenaire rods, washing dolls and dishes at a water table, painting heart shapes at an easel, stapling and taping together pieces of colored paper, working with puzzles, and playing with heaps of cornmeal at a sand table. Though it is a busy scene, the atmosphere is calm and relaxed with children shifting from one location to another on their own initiative. The teacher and her assistant scan the room looking for signals of difficulties, such as children wandering or disputes within a group. They stop to work with or question individual children and respond to requests from them.

Materials are designed for children to explore concepts in a variety of ways. In an area devoted to mathematics, children may find more than 20 different activities, including jars of pennies and other materials for counting, segmented hand shapes, caterpillars, animal shapes, and other puzzles and games which reenforce numberical concepts.

Teaching strategies often include an overarching **theme** for a week or a longer period of time, to tie together materials, discussion, and activities. For example, a typical day in a preschool during "Frog Week" might be as follows:

> "Circle time" reflects the week's theme: the routine includes reciting frog poems, using a frog puppet in a finger-play, and holding a "frog" conversation. After a lusty rendition of a song about five frogs, children move to the activity areas. In addition to the normal

> offerings of painting, blocks, reading, and housekeeping areas, there is a beanbag game involving a large frog cutout, books about frogs to look at, a table where students can trace frog shapes with magic markers or lace the edges of frog shapes with yarn, and a large laminated chart tracing the stages in the growth of a frog.

Along with orchestrating this range of activities, teachers' **discourse** with children is a crucial aspect of early childhood instruction. Teachers talk with children to promote speaking and listening skills and to probe and extend their thinking about ideas, concepts and relations.

> A teacher reads *The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs* to a small group of four-year-olds, sprawled comfortably in a carpeted area of the classroom. (This book, which depicts the wolf's side of the story, assumes prior knowledge of the standard version of the tale). When a tussle breaks out between two boys, the teacher interrupts her reading and deftly connects the story to the children's immediate experience: "What's wrong?... See, just like in this book there are two sides to the story." Later she asks if the children realize that people eat pigs in the form of pork or ham and inquires, "If a wolf knocked on your door, would you answer? If anyone you don't know knocks on your door will you open it?" She interjects questions to keep the children's attention and see how they interpret the narrative: "Now the second pig built his house a little bit smarter. What material did he use? Ooh, you're smart!" She concludes this activity asking, "Who's telling the truth do you think?" prompting several responses and a vote among the group. The majority sides with the pigs' version of events, rather than this account's stance which argues that the wolf was "framed."

This basic environment of set of instructional strategies offers tremendous opportunities for teachers to observe children's interests, language, behavior, and skills. Yet it also creates a highly complex and dynamic setting to manage. Teachers must devise ways to keep track of patterns of children's work and ascertain when and how to intervene into conflicts or activities. **Assessment** activities are knit into the ongoing fabric of teachers' observations and interactions with children. Teachers use observational checklists, anecdotal records, samples of work, and tape recorders to record data on children's choices, language, and interactions. Staff members then analyze how each child is progressing in social, language, physical, emotional, and cognitive development.

It is also clear from our observations that these central principles and strategies can be interpreted and implemented with varying degrees of skill and judgment, and in varying shades and spirits. For example, we observed several strategies in implementing activity-based learning centers. In the Covington, KY early childhood center, we observed up to 14 different clusters of children working on different activities, with the freedom to move around the classroom and choose new partners and projects on their own initiative. By contrast, in an Oakland, California child care center, teachers divided the class into three specific groups and then assigned each cluster of children a place to be for each time period.

The spread of this set of ideals and practices is remarkable, given the variety of organizational settings, policies, and resources which characterize early childhood services. This can be credited to the steady advocacy of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, emerging research on the effectiveness of this approach, and the availability of large-scale training and implementation materials from organizations such as the High/Scope Research Foundation.

2. Teachers work to respond to the individual needs of students within a framework of developmentally appropriate practice.

Within a general framework of age-appropriate practices, teachers work to meet the individual needs of children. One theme we heard frequently from teachers was increasing concern about the **effects of stress and violence** on children, noted by one staff member as follows:

> "Parents are so stressed that they can't give children the time and attention they need and children are acting out in school and in child care. Perhaps the only way that children get attention at home is through negative behavior, or children are picking up aggression from their older siblings or television. We're seeing more acting out of Ninja Turtles and Power Ranger characters in the centers -- kids who whack, whack, and knock somebody down or tackle everybody. It's very challenging for teachers."

In similar example, teachers at Inn Circle's program for homeless families find that they must adjust their routines and expectations to children who are aggressive, use obscenities, have difficulty expressing themselves and problems in following rules. Children may be afraid to nap because the mats remind them of homeless shelters they have stayed in. They have difficulty adjusting to transitions between activities or minor changes in schedule or staffing. Teachers find that it can take as much as six months for homeless children to settle into group routines, compared to a month for other populations traditionally served by Head Start.

Programs are developing a variety of strategies for dealing with these problems, such as these observations by a supervisor of teachers in one agency:

> "We work hard to help children work problems out using words -- to say why they're angry or unhappy -- which is difficult at this age. We try to use a lot of touch therapy and building a solid relationship with that child. When they're upset, we often just hold them and rock them to help them calm down. We tell teachers that the most difficult and frustrating child is the one that you've got to encourage by finding little things they do well that you can praise. We work with parents to find effective ways to guide their children without using physical aggression."

A strategy used across Sheltering Arms child care centers is "primary bonding groups," which match each classroom staff member with a small group of students throughout the year. A child's "primary" staff person carries out any ongoing assessment and leads the child's parent conference. This idea was originally developed by teachers in the infant class and then extended to older children.

When teachers notice a child with a more specific or serious behavioral problem, they employ a variety of strategies to help understand the causes of the difficulty and work to invent different approaches to help the child and eliminate the problem:

> "For example, if a child is hitting or biting in the classroom, the staff will document when and where it happens over a period of three days and look for patterns in the circumstances. Perhaps it happens frequently around nap time and then the teacher can try a different approach with that routine. When we run out of answers we call in central office staff and experts from a program for special needs children and we ask parents if there is something going on at home. For example, we had a five-year-old who had a terrible problem of biting children. We did our three-day observation and asked the North Metro special education staff to observe him. Then I met with his mother and grandfather to establish some consistency with how they worked with him

> at home. It turned out that he was very angry about some things that were going on at home. One thing we did was to involve him in cleaning the room and having some special responsibilities within the group. And it got better gradually."

Teachers also adjust classroom routines based on the characteristics of their children involves issues of **culture and language**. Some strategies for responding in this domain are generic: home visits, bringing families and community residents into the classroom, taking children out to observe and participate in community events, and hiring neighborhood residents as staff members. In addition, programs are reexamining more basic assumptions and routines of teachers. As one of the FACE Program Coordinators observed:

> "A lot of Navajo children's learning traditionally involves sitting back and watching until a child feels comfortable enough to try out something and not fail. It's a demonstration type of learning, different from the White way of 'get out there and do it and if you make mistakes, you learn from them.'"

FACE classrooms and activities build from the backgrounds of children in a number of ways. For example, given the importance and complexity of family and clan relationships, one classroom includes a large chart displaying children's names, clans and familial connections, and teachers review this information in discussions and activities. Teachers use Navajo songs and chants as part of daily activities; children and teachers address each other as "sister" and "brother", as is common in the community; and displays and labels in the room are written in both English and Navajo.

Teachers also adapt classroom practices to the characteristics of children due to **disabilities**. Every program profiled in this study enrolls children with special needs and serves them through a variety of staffing arrangements and collaborative agreements with other community agencies. For example, the Biggs Center in Covington, Kentucky mainstreams fifteen disabled children in their regular classrooms, with a team of one special education teacher and seven classroom assistants. The teacher oversees diagnostic testing, developing individual education plans, coordinating other specialists, such as speech and physical therapists, supervising the work of assistants and troubleshooting when staff members raise questions and problems.

3. Making parents a part of the daily life in early childhood classrooms.

Early childhood agencies provide a variety of direct services to parents and work to involve them in planning and decisionmaking. However, early childhood teachers also orient their daily work towards families in several ways, including their design of the physical environment of classrooms, their regular use of parents as volunteers, their efforts to communicate with parents around the progress of their children, their work to collaborate with other program staff, and their efforts to deal on occasion with conflicts with parents. In all these ways, a commitment to a partnership with parents is reflected in the core of classroom life and the daily work of teachers.

To begin with, the **physical environment of** early childhood centers is organized to welcome and include parents as visitors, observers, and participants. For the most part, parents encounter small-scale, accessible facilities and find it easy to visit without negotiating long, confusing hallways or formidable security systems. Centers invariably feature a bulletin board for parents, including a materials such as announcements of parent training sessions, employment opportunities, medical emergency forms, a list of recommended children's books, a handout on disciplining young children, a list of overall program goals, a chart showing the parents assigned to do laundry on a rotating basis, and posters about community events.

The physical environment of classrooms also offers clear signals to parents, guests and volunteers. Guests find a wealth of labels, charts and displays explaining the workings and purposes of various activities and materials. One center posts laminated pictures of all staff members, including their educational background and experience. Parents find charts outlining the daily schedule and classroom rules, and the academic objectives associated with interest center. So, in the reading corner, parents are informed that children are learning to recognize left-to-right and top-to-bottom sequences; retell a story in chronological order; and recognize that symbols have meaning. Other displays are resources for both children and visitors, such as "experience charts", listing 22 items that students remember seeing on a recent trip to the circus. Programs post information on the major thematic emphasis for the week, the new activities and objectives for the day, and enrichment activities which parents can do with their children at home. Thus, without asking the teacher any questions, parents can learn about the schedule, rules, activities and the objectives of the program. By these indicators, early childhood programs are open to family members -- and even lean forward with an air of hospitality and a desire to explain their inner workings to outsiders.

Parents and family members have regular presence as **volunteers** in these classrooms. For example, FACE programs include daily Parent And Child Time in their family literacy strategy, where parents read, work, play and observe their children as a core component of its program. Covington, Kentucky sponsors a highly successful training program to prepare mothers to work in classrooms. Programs accommodate the schedules and readiness of parents by offering a range of options for involvement. For example, Dad's Nights in Covington draw over 100 fathers who come with their children to spend time experiencing the activities and materials. An important by-product of developmentally appropriate modes of instruction is that small group activities allow parents easy opportunities to edge into the learning process and to genuinely contribute to the classroom community. When work goes on in a half-dozen or more small groups, there is no way for staff members to be engaged with every cluster of children. So a parent or community volunteer can pick a comfortable group or activity, be it playing with blocks or reading a story, and participate in a low pressure, unobtrusive fashion.

Teachers also reach out to **communicate** with parents, for a variety of reasons. Parents want to know what their children are doing and how they are doing. Staff want to ensure that parents' interactions with children at home complement the goals and strategies in use in classrooms. Parents often seek help from their child's teacher in understanding a child's behavior or in responding to problems with the child at home. Teachers seek information from parents to help understand the child's responses in the classroom setting. Conferences are held to update parents on the progress of their children and to respond to parental questions and concerns. However, teachers also visit homes and talk with parents to learn more about children so that they can understand them and teach them more effectively, as two teachers explained:

> "You can relate to the kids better when you get to know the parents. For example, we had a seven-month-old infant who was having crying spells and throwing up, acting nervous and fearful of noises. We asked the parents what was going on at home. The mom told us that she had been in a serious accident while carrying the child and that she was fearful that the child had been hurt. This information helped us show more patience towards the child and a more nurturing attitude towards the family as well."

> "Often important things don't come out when people fill out the entrance form. We've heard stories from one family from El Salvador where their dad was tortured by soldiers. We've learned that Vietnamese families have a tradition of placing hot coins on children' bodies when they are ill. They believe healing won't work unless the coin

> leaves a black and blue mark -- so this raises issues for teachers trained to look for evidence of child abuse."

These programs develop regular mechanisms for **staff collaboration**, particularly to ensure that classroom staff can draw on information and insights gained by other staff who work with parents:

> "Trying to meet the needs of children and parents simultaneously is hard, especially when those needs may be in conflict. It's difficult for staff to make appropriate judgements, particularly when they see the child every day, but may not be hearing the parent's side of the story. Our Parent Coordinator contributes information about parents' situations in our staff conferences on individual children. It helped us to become more understanding and less adversarial in working with families. Now we are more likely to appreciate that if Johnny has a hard day it may be because Mom didn't get home until 2:00 in the morning, or because he's staying with an older sister and isn't seeing mom as much as he would like. Or, if this mother had a crisis in her family over the weekend and there was violence, you'd better understand the effects on the behavior of the child and the mother."

Finally, early childhood teachers also learn how to **deal with conflicts** with parents. When parents are active in programs, and genuine efforts are made to learn their views, harmony and consensus are not the only possible outcomes. Parent involvement can give rise to differences of opinion and dilemmas, as noted by two staff members:

> "I want the children to get a good base of Navajo -- at three and four the children are still developing their language -- but many parents want them exposed to English...We struggle with it. It's a dilemma."

> "I'm concerned that in professionalizing early childhood we may have professionalized some parents out of the process. We assumed that the best thing was to make every classroom 100% developmentally appropriate to the point of becoming rigid. We're now beginning to view our classroom as not just being a space for children but also for parents. You can't hand parents a sheet of paper telling them what they can't do in the classroom and then expect them to feel invested in the center. There are certain things the parents are going to gain an understanding of during the year. Let's say a parent is eager to help her child with reading skills by using flashcards. Let the parent use flashcards but as relationships grow, teachers can share about other ways we prepare the child to read and developmentally appropriate approaches that engage children more effectively."

A base of positive relationships is particularly helpful when difficult problems come up regarding a child's interaction in the classroom, as illustrated by the following story from a parent:

> "I may have the only child who was in danger of being kicked out of a preschool! Steven was having a lot of problems to the point that his teacher was going to quit because she felt she had failed him. The director called us in and told us she was going to have to ask us to take him out because he was trying to push children off the top of outdoor play structures. However, first they referred us to a clinic at Emory University to have him assessed and once he was diagnosed as hyperactive and put on medication, we saw an immediate change. I don't think another center would have taken the time and been as careful with an individual child or with us as parents."

4. Programs collaborate with public schools to ease the transition of children and families as they enter kindergarten.

Programs have progressed from informal networking with school administrators to formal arrangements to ease children and parents from preschool to kindergarten. On the informal end, program directors or family coordinators convey to their school contacts issues and questions that come from parents. They also try to help the school in a variety of ways in order to build a climate of cooperation, as when a Parent Services Project site provided a volunteer placement for a middle school student who was at risk of being expelled. While the programs work with schools, staff members also prepare parents and children to deal with the realities of the school environment. Classes of four-year-olds may visit nearby elementary schools, to become familiar with the cafeteria, classrooms, library, and playground. Program staff members coach parents to ask questions of school personnel and give them the skills and confidence to handle future issues on their own.

> "I do a workshop for parents each year on preparing for kindergarten. I don't tell them who we're **really** preparing, which is parents more than children. They need to know what they're looking for, how to ask appropriate questions, and not to just accept the school's approach."

Programs and schools also develop more formal "transition agreements" for sharing information. Child Development, Inc. has worked out such agreements to encourage meetings of CDI and district teachers; the transfer of assessment data and other records on children and families to the public schools; visits by teachers to observe classroom activities across program lines; the involvement of Head Start parents in the kindergarten program; and joint staff training.

Other agencies have formed transition advisory committees in conjunction with local school personnel. For example, through a committee of Head Start and school teachers and counselors, the Inn Circle program has given the school district a better understanding of the needs of homeless children, and has worked to develop consensus about the school's responsibility to initiate outreach to parents. It has a staff member who acts as liaison to assist parents in enrolling their children in school. In turn, the district has clarified its expectations about how parents can help prepare their children for school. The district's parent involvement programs are linked to the homeless facility through an Inn Circle staff person who works with the school to identify potential participants. An after-school program for older children is also located at Inn Circle and partly staffed by parent volunteers.

Many agencies continue informal contact with parents after their children leave the program. On occasion they are able to serve as resources and advisors to parents in dealing with school issues:

> "One of our children left here and the school immediately wanted to put him through testing for special education. I talked with the mother and said, 'You need to find out exactly what they're testing him for and what the process is,' and she and her husband went in and talked with the school. They were able to select his teacher and the school put him in a really good kindergarten classroom and he has done very well."

5. Working to promote greater continuity between early childhood and public school settings.

Developing continuity of practice can be built into the design of an early childhood program. Two programs under school auspices have adopted this strategy -- the Jersey City initiative and FACE, both of which train K-3 teachers in the High/Scope curriculum. In Jersey City, other important steps have been taken to implement a child-centered curriculum for the primary grades, such as appointing the early childhood program coordinator, Pat Noonan, as the evaluator for kindergarten and primary grade teachers system-wide. These strategies have led to observable changes in classroom practice. For example, kindergarten classrooms have a new report card (providing narrative information on developmental benchmarks rather than letter grades), and they have discarded the use of workbooks and standardized tests.

The expertise of preschool programs in working with parents can be shared with elementary schools. Principals and teachers from the Covington district have been invited by the assistant superintendent to observe the Biggs Center activities. The superintendent encouraged an elementary school to pair with the Biggs Center which serves as a mentor on parent involvement activities. The Biggs Center's family advocates have provided technical assistance to elementary schools setting up Family Resource Centers.

Services for special needs children have a longer history of efforts to address continuity issues. There is a policy framework and an administrative structure in schools to handle services from preschool through the school years. Parents are involved in the design of individual educational plans from the beginning. Coordinating councils composed of different service agencies, including schools and Head Start, help ensure the smooth flow of communication, screening and evaluation, and therapeutic services. Unfortunately, these structures are not legally mandated for supporting continuity for non-disabled young children entering school from a variety of early childhood programs.

The extent to which comprehensive services continue in elementary schools may depend on priorities in overall school reform. Education reform at the state level provides the framework for the range of family support and parent involvement activities, as in the case of Kentucky's Family Resource Centers; but local school improvement projects are also open to strengthening community connections. The Inn Circle program and the school district are part of a case management team that includes several community agencies to help Inn Circle families with counseling, social work, and psychological services. The Parent Services Project is working closely with the Ross Valley School District to apply the PSP principles to families with older children, particularly parents of early adolescents with serious problems. The district has formed a task force on family support; as a result, several former PSP parents initiated a Family Forum Project to improve communication and support resources through monthly meetings, training sessions, and networking. In another instance, the principal of a school has involved parents with teachers in redesigning the primary grade program. Yet in these efforts, both early childhood and public school leaders are discovering how difficult it is to change established practices in schools:

> "You've got a whole culture that you're trying to reshape. We need to get a grip on things as simple as a parent being called into a conference with seven school people, where the balance of power is totally ominous, or how to plan an open school night so that all parents feel comfortable about coming."
>
> "Parents don't want plans handed to them. But there are practical limitations on how much teachers can do and how much time working parents have to be more intensively involved in collaborative planning. It's a very practical problem-- it's not always a matter of lack of good will."

Thus, early childhood programs engage with public schools in two ways: working to prepare children and families for a smooth transition as they move into elementary schools and working to enhance continuity of educational philosophy and practice with kindergarten and primary grade programs. In the first instance, they accept the reality of differences between schools and early childhood centers and prepare children and parents to adjust. In the second instance, they collaborate to help change school practices, to make them more congruent with principles and routines common to early childhood agencies and classrooms.

STRATEGIES TO SERVE AND INVOLVE FAMILIES

The early childhood programs in the study support and encourage parent participation in child development and learning. This family focus reflects the renewed interest in ecological approaches to child development that situate learning in the context of home, school, and community. It is backed by federal and state policies that require working with families as a condition of early childhood program funding. Equally important, early childhood professionals believe greater continuity and mutual understanding between the home and preschool reinforces and sustains the benefits of their work with children. They also recognize the stresses felt by families -- from work or its absence, poverty, single parenthood, or social isolation -- and the need to address these problems if parents are to adequately nurture their children. This ecological approach finds expression in the wide range of activities these programs use to support parents in their roles as caregivers, breadwinners and community members.

Context: Family Needs and Program Characteristics

The seven programs serve low-income families who are struggling to provide children with basic necessities and a warm, caring home. The majority of families are living at or close to the poverty level and a substantial proportion are on some kind of public assistance. Some programs serve families with low levels of literacy while others work with parents who are either attending school or are employed in low-wage-rate jobs. Many of the children grow up in single-parent homes; children in Covington tend to be part of extended families where grandparents play an important role in raising their grandchildren. Both the Jersey City school district and the Parent Services Project work with immigrant families. The overall picture that emerges in one of programs serving multi-stressed, multi-problem families with challenges including poverty and unemployment, domestic violence, illiteracy, social isolation, and substance abuse.

Many of the children grow up in stressful home environments, and staff link the behaviors of the children with their family situations.

> "What do parents need? For some the needs are astronomical. Just getting kids to medical services is a problem. Usually, families have only one vehicle and the father takes it to work. Kids without clothes don't come to school either. Other kids are living with grandparents due to marital problems at home. We find some substance abuse, some sexual and physical abuse, emotional issues, marital problems and poor self-esteem in moms who feel trapped at home."

> "Their problems include substandard or crowded housing; deadend, low-paying jobs; inadequate medical care; lack of English language skills and cultural dislocation. Some don't have enough food to feed their children. They feel guilty about leaving their children to go to work; they worry about their parenting competence; and are exhausted by the endless rounds of work and child care. Their self-esteem tends to be low; they often feel that their problems are beyond their control. Compounding all these problems is a feeling of isolation from other people, especially other parents."

One program, the Sheltering Arms agency, also addresses the specific concerns of middle income families. While these families have few of the economic and social service needs of lower income families, they nonetheless need help with parenting issues and managing stress associated with balancing work and family commitments. A Family Service Coordinator observes,

> "We do a lot of talking with parents about reducing stress in their children's lives. Many of these parents work 10, 12, 14 hours a day plus do a lengthy commute. People are on this board and running to activities, and it leaves very few hours to spend with their children. Often we try to say gently, 'your child needs your attention -- you need to set aside some time to spend with him.' We try to help parents understand how important their interactions with their child can be, because they're in group care a long time everyday. We also have many divorce situations where children are reacting to stress and parents may be placing us in the middle of conflicts. And we have quite a few single parents who need a lot of support."

In order to be responsive to families, each of the seven programs has developed services to meet the needs of families in their particular communities.

- Inn Circle in Cedar Rapids works with homeless and abused mothers who live in a transitional housing facility. It offers a secure and supportive environment where mothers can gain the skills necessary for self-sufficiency, build informal networks, and become prepared to participate in community associations, such as Scouting and sports programs, religious institutions, and block clubs.

- Sheltering Arms in Atlanta responds to the high priority working families place on finding quality, affordable child care. It provides an important support to families by serving children as young as six weeks of age through five years, fifty-two weeks a year and up to eleven hours per day. This schedule meets the needs of parents juggling the logistical and economic demands of parenting, employment, and maintaining a home.

- FACE in New Mexico operates in isolated, rural Native American communities with problems of poverty and unemployment, alcoholism, and a lack of basic services. Its weekly home visits for families with very young children provide support for parents and grandparents who otherwise would have no access to broad and diverse child development information. Through a family literacy component, parents develop the educational skills they need while their children are in preschool.

As shown in the attached chart, programs differ in their capacities and relative emphases on specific services. However, every agency exhibits strategies which address share four core goals and outcomes of family support:

1. Programs enhance parents' skills, knowledge, and motivation to be involved in their children's education.

2. Programs support parents in their journey toward education and self-sufficiency.

3. Programs help families gain access to services which address their needs through partnerships with community agencies.

4. Programs create "caring communities" for parents by providing social support and catalyzing participation in community institutions.

The next section describes strategies programs use to meet each of these goals.

TABLE 2

SERVICES FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

	Home Visits	Parenting Sessions	Volunteer in classroom & other activities	Fathers Activities	Adult education	Job/life skills training	Referrals: social, legal, health services
Covington	x	x	x	x		x	x
CDI	x	x	x		x	x	x
FACE	x	x	x		x	x	
Inn Circle	x	x	x			x	x
PSP		x	x	x			x
Jersey City, NJ	x	x	x		x		x
Sheltering Arms	x	x	x			x	x

Family Support and Involvement Strategies

1. Programs seek to enhance parents' skills, knowledge, and motivation to be involved with their children's education.

> "Basically, my discipline was spanking, and the staff said, 'Spanking is not helping. Find other ways to discipline. Take away the toys, or put him in the chair, try things like that.' When I whipped Christopher, he was getting worse. But if I tell him he has to sit in that chair and look at books, he'll say, 'Momma, I promise I will be good. I won't open your mail tomorrow and I won't give you any more problems.' He hates to be restricted because he's a VERY active child, and sitting still for two minutes seems like 20 years to him."

A core strategy in all seven agencies are parent education services, offered in a variety of forms and settings. Parenting sessions help parents learn about child development, cope with challenges such as discipline and nurturing self-esteem, and engage in developmental activities with their children. Parent education is fostered directly through home visits and group meetings, and indirectly through a variety of exchanges between families and program staff members.

Home visits are special learning occasions where a parent and child receive individualized attention. Home visitors engage the child in stimulating activities to develop motor, cognitive, language, and social skills. Parents and home visitor share information about the child's behaviors, milestones are noted, and parents learn about the value of talking to and playing with their child. The sessions also include child screening for early detection of developmental delays. In two program sites, home visits include other children or the extended family, thus enlarging the network of positive influences on the child. Programs used the Missouri-based Parents as Teachers or the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) as models, or developed their own curriculums.

The regularity of face-to-face contact, at least weekly in two programs, and the friendly, supportive tone of the home visitors set the stage for a positive exchange of child development information. The home visitors create a special relationship with the family, and parents feel that they have someone who genuinely cares about their child. Parents give top marks to home visits:

> "I like the home visits because I have my older teenagers, with my grandson being three. The teens learn how to play with him and teach him things, too, with the games that the teachers bring."

> "To meet the cost of living, usually both father and mother are working. The parenting time gives me ideas how we can cope with the stress of working and childrearing and what we can do at home. It's not just sticking your child in front of the TV."

Home visitors are flexible in their engagement with parent and child, adapting their practices to fit both the childrearing patterns of diverse groups and the particular situations of families:

> "I don't have a lot of success with certain parents in home visits, in terms of getting them involved in the activities. I just do the activity with the child and talk to the parent at the same time. Then often the next week when I go back, the parent tells me, 'We did this and I noticed she was using her thumb and her finger.' So I know that the parent did the activity later, after I left, which is okay."

While our research provided only limited observations of home visiting, we were struck by the variation of approaches to staffing and service delivery:

- Some programs required home visitors to go out in pairs, while others sent out only one visitor per family.

- Staff credentials varied from specially trained paraprofessionals to certified teachers.

- Home visitors varied in their focus of attention. Some concentrate on interacting with the child, some with the parent, and some on the interaction of parent and child. Some home visitors try to actively involve parents in child development activities; others are satisfied to have the parent play the role of observer.

- While all home visitors developed a lesson plan, some are more open to allowing the child or parent to guide part of the session.

Preschool classroom teachers also carry out home visits, to learn more about families and to promote communication with parents. The Jersey City program schedules teacher home visits for parents who have difficulty coming to school to discuss their children's progress. Covington teachers make four home visits during the school year that function as an extension of classroom activities in a home setting.

Parent education also takes place in group meetings which include a blend of presentations, questions-and-answers, open discussion, and activities. Most agencies carried out a series of meetings tied to a specific curriculum and a trained facilitator. Programs used curriculums such as Nurturing Program, Effective Parenting Information for Children (EPIC), Winning Program, and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), as well as developing their own materials on topics of interest to parents in their program. Parents give these accounts of positive experiences:

> "I took the STEP course and enjoyed listening to problems and suggestions from other parents...I've been in the child care field myself, but that background means nothing when you get your own kids and they're doing things that you don't know how to deal with and you're afraid you're getting overly negative."

> "A few weeks ago, we had a meeting on reading readiness and we learned about making books. Both my parents died before I got out of high school. I wanted to let my child know that she was named for her grandparents. So I made a book with mom and dad's pictures in it."

Parent education also occurs as a by-product of other exchanges between programs and parents. In the words of a parent:

> "I watched how they took care of the kids. I volunteered for nine months everyday while waiting for my next child to be born. You see the way the teachers sit and talk to the kids and how they give them time out instead of spanking them."

Efforts to explain classroom practices offer the added benefit of exposing parents to ideas and strategies which they can use at home with their children. For example, in order to demonstrate to parents that children learn through active engagement with materials, preschool teachers in Jersey City divided parents who attended a workshop into two groups with different methods of accomplishing an art activity. A teacher explains, "One of us acted like the traditional teacher who gave a lecture, passed out ditto paper and asked parents to color in the apple and the orange. Another one of us asked parents to cut up different types of apples and oranges, taste them, talk about their differences and go through a range of other experiences. When we brought them back we asked, 'well, who has something to show?' and of course, it was the ditto group; but when we asked 'who learned more?', of course, it was the hands-on group. Now we hear, parents talking to each other and saying, 'It's okay if the kids are not bringing papers home,' but the first year we were being pressured like crazy with comments like, 'How come you're not teaching them their A, B, C's? How come they don't know how to spell their names?'."

2. Programs support parents in their journey towards education and self-sufficiency.

The seven programs offer parents the opportunity to improve literacy skills, continue their education, obtain employment training, and move toward self-sufficiency. Programs offer direct services, usually through Even Start or similar family literacy initiatives, and they refer parents to community colleges, school district vocational programs, or other services available in the community. Through these early childhood programs, family coordinators help parents prioritize goals and gain access to educational opportunities within the program or in the community. Parents also benefit from the presence of other parents who provide support and encouragement. One advantage of linking adult education services with early childhood programs lies in the friendly, non-threatening, and nurturing settings of such programs. This is especially important for parents who dropped out of school and might have negative attitudes about learning and schooling.

Parents praise the programs for progress they have made in career and personal goals and the repercussions on their children:

> "My son says to me, 'Mom, are you going to school today?' And I'm like, 'Yeah.' We sit down together and do our homework together, and if he sees me involved and waiting to learn, then that's going to make him want to learn even more, too."
>
> "Staying at home was real important to me. I didn't want to leave the security of the house with me and my kids. I was terrified of going anywhere. If I hadn't been in the program, I wouldn't have my GED, I wouldn't have volunteered in elementary school, and I wouldn't be registered at Arkansas Tech."

Linking adult education and job training with incentives such as job opportunities, transportation, and child care helps attract parent participation. Two programs in particular have developed successful agency partnerships that connect training and job placement:

- Child Development Inc.'s Parent Child Center (PCC) in Clarksville is a child care and job placement site for high school dropouts funded by the Job Training Partnership Act. The program offers adult basic education and GED preparation, and training on life skills, parenting, and the use of computer-assisted instructional materials. Community experts speak to the parents on issues such as rape prevention, hygiene, and dental care. The parents spend at least two hours a week volunteering in the child care center.

- The Covington, KY program trains parents to become classroom volunteers. About 100 parents annually attend this twelve-hour training course. They are paid a $10/half-day stipend during training and classroom service. Some parents continue to receive intensive training in special education and are hired as school aides; the agency also offers monthly training opportunities to individuals interested in becoming child care providers.

The seven programs also supplement adult education and job training services with life skills training and decision making responsibilities; together these form a coherent set of experiences that enable individuals to increase their employment potential.

- Formerly homeless mothers at Inn Circle must be in education and training programs or be employed at least 20 hours per week. Parents also serve on committees and make decisions about the management of Inn Circle. One program administrator remarks, "There's shared leadership in those groups. The parents are learning the kinds of skills that employers are impressed with -- somebody who knows how to take responsibility for something and to handle it well." Through the committees as well as by forming support groups around issues of domestic violence, addiction, and self-esteem, parents gain valuable experience in communication, management, and leadership.

Helping families move toward self-sufficiency is not without challenges, some of them quite formidable. The FACE programs in New Mexico offer a family literacy component requiring parents to attend adult education classes. This is difficult to implement when parents are working, looking for work, or find seasonal employment that interferes with class attendance. To meet policy guidelines while keeping attuned to community conditions, the programs have scheduled evening sessions to accommodate working parents. In other communities it is very difficult to motivate parents because of limited employment benefits:

> "If you're making $260 per month on AFDC plus WIC, health care and food stamps, how attractive is a job at $4.25 per hour when it means you will lose Medicaid and other supports?"

3. Programs help parents gain access to services which address their needs through partnerships with community agencies.

Programs develop partnerships because they are mandated in legislation, and because they recognize that families have many tangible needs that cut across different service agencies. To program directors it became apparent that families were becoming lost and frustrated with the fragmented and bureaucratic system. At the same time, forming partnerships to improve the accessibility of services involves an investment of time, energy, and patience to overcome turf concerns. Linkages with community agencies take various forms and vary in complexity. There are formal collaborations that involve joint management and operation of a program, or cost sharing of staff positions. There are also instances of directors and staff using informal networks to refer families to services offered by other agencies. Four common strategies and the issues that arise in their implementation are described below.

Referrals are the most common mechanism for extending services beyond what a program can provide on its own. Their success depends to a great deal on the presence of a family coordinator who provides parents with basic information on where they can find assistance, mediates contacts between parents and agency providers, and follows up on initial contacts.

> "When we find out about a need, we try to connect families with the right agency. One person came and threw her income tax form in my face and said, 'You call them; I haven't received my refund yet.' It turned out that she was afraid her English wasn't good enough to be confident in talking with the IRS. So I made a bargain, saying I'll make the call and stay on the line, if you do the talking."

> "Last year we were able to help ten inner city families obtain homes with Habitat for Humanity. Habitat representatives have presented at parent groups and family service staff have helped interested parents with the paperwork and other requirements for participation."

Shared services involve linkages with other community agencies to trade services and resources for a common base of families. There are two patterns of shared services: fees for services, such as contracts with health providers to perform examinations and preventive services, and coordination strategies. Six programs actively coordinate their services with other agencies. Partner agencies may arrange a division of labor in terms of recruiting participants, providing transportation and child care, and offering space. Cost-sharing can also become part of the agreement.

- A Head Start program and an area education agency in Cedar Rapids share the cost of an education specialist to work with children who have developmental delays.

- Child Development, Inc. (CDI) works with Project Success, Arkansas' welfare program. CDI provides child care and transportation for the children and parents, many of whom do not own automobiles.

- The Northern Kentucky University Reentry Center provides an instructor and materials for a carpentry workshop for unemployed mothers in Covington. The early childhood program recruits the mothers, offers classroom space, and provides child care and transportation.

Only one program, Inn Circle, has developed a **case management** system for its participants. Inn Circle meets regularly with a team of health, mental health, education, and social service providers to coordinate the services being received by its families.

Five programs are participating in more comprehensive, community-wide **systems change** efforts to simplify different public programs and funding streams and to provide better coordination of services that involve a common set of families. Over the short-term, programs report ease of making referrals, ability to recognize gaps in services and to remedy them, and progress towards addressing more complex cross-agency issues.

- Child Development, Inc. is part of a county collaborative that developed a centralized referral network with a directory and phone number; the collaborative is now drafting a one-page document that will serve as a single universal application for service eligibility.

- Sheltering Arms participates in a community planning and service project that reviews the needs for early childhood and health services at the neighborhood level. Its neighborhood cluster served as an umbrella group in coordinating proposals for the state prekindergarten funding and is now working to create a new health clinic in the neighborhood.

- Through the Jersey City Interagency Collaborative Council, one elementary school has been assigned a service broker whose main responsibility is to connect the families of the students to services provided by the county.

Partnership relationships also involve difficulties. For example, the assumption behind making referrals is that services are available, whereas in many communities programs encounter demand that is greater than their capacity to respond:

> "Fifteen years ago, we had regional mental health centers, with child and family therapists all over the county and now they're gone. Principals and teachers become the de facto counselors for the kids. And so I wonder, how can this family get support? We can hook them up sometimes to an agency, but services are short-lived and, and the journey to get services is lengthy and cumbersome."
>
> "There's a long waiting list for health services. Parents may go to the hospital at 8:00 a.m. and not come out until 9:00 at night. The health department is also backed up -- it may take 30 days for parents who need physical exams for their children."

The logistics and management of collaborative strategies can also be daunting:

> "I would not want to underplay the difficulties of our first year -- there were questions of liability, legal problems, and even the logistics of moving people from the center to our clinic. Financially, nobody was making money on this thing. If there was no commitment it would have been easy to say within six months, 'This isn't worth it,' and then just let things slide."

Coordination is also difficult when agencies do not share the same philosophy of working with families. While early childhood program staffers try to model respectfulness, they are wary of agencies that are more punitive than empowering in their relationships with families. Staff members sometimes find that there is no point in referring families to agencies where "they won't be treated right." Program directors also work hard to influence social service agencies to take a preventative approach instead of waiting for a crisis to spur intervention. Additionally, family coordinators feel stymied by the fast turnover of personnel in other, larger bureaucracies. It becomes frustrating to keep informing new staff of their program's existence and to develop a relationship that facilitates access to services.

4. Programs create "caring communities" for parents by providing social support and catalyzing participation in community institutions.

The process of helping families become self-sufficient involves a careful blending and sequencing of provided needed services, reducing family isolation, expanding social support networks, and giving families a chance to contribute and be valued by their community. Programs have learned to begin with building trust, addressing tangible needs and providing social support. Over time, staff members introduce more challenging forms of involvement, such as confronting literacy, occupational, substance abuse, or marital issues. Ultimately, programs help parents to function as contributing members, decisionmakers, and sources of support to other parents.

Very often the **relationships between parents and staff** have the most impact on parents' involvement with the program. When program directors, teachers, and family support staff make an effort to welcome parents, help them, and build trusting relationships, parents respond by making the effort to work closely with them and to live up to their expectations. Parents feel they belong to a community that respects them, takes their needs seriously, and gives them the opportunity to change their lives. Time and again satisfied parents refer to the program staff as "family," reflecting the comfort, security and support of an intimate group:

> "They (family workers) give you a chance to build your own self-esteem. The program's not just dealing with your kids but they also teach you to take time out for yourself. When we are at home things get so stressed that we can't stand nobody, and we can't stand ourselves. But you can come here and talk to anybody -- a parent, a staff member -- and nobody's going to look down on you. They respect you for who you are and not what you are."

When staff members listen to parents and act on their suggestions, parents feel empowered and begin to take a more active role in the program. For some parents, this engagement catalyzes broader involvement in community affairs and advocacy for children.

Parents appreciate the personal commitment of staff members who combine roles of teacher, adviser, advocate, and liaison to other resources in the community. Parents also find in the centers a supportive setting that helps relieve family and work-related stress. In one program where staff members join parents in social activities, they, too, benefit from stress reduction:

> "Some parents did a workshop on hand-painting silk and wool material. The staff benefits from these sessions as much as parents. Sometimes you get so busy, it can be a real downer on your soul. For me, sewing and embroidery help me cope. And as we worked we talked together. One parent who had been laid off shared that she felt she had been thrown away. After listening to her, we were able to refer her to a mental health center."

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Parent-to-parent relationships are another important source of support and an opportunity for parents to extend themselves as contributors in a program setting. A Covington parent says,

> "When some of the girls went to the vocational school to have their make-over, they needed a babysitter, so I volunteered my house. That's something that I could do to help somebody else out.."

Another parent who had been isolated for many years developed friendships at the preschool center and formed a group session called "Can We Talk?" after the television show of the same name.

While support group sessions tend to draw mothers, the Parent Services Project in Fairfax (CA) also makes a special effort to draw fathers:

> "We have a Fathers' Breakfast regularly where we cook and eat breakfast with the kids for the first hour, then have child care so that the men can talk. We have a good time, complaining and sharing concerns about kids, wives, bosses, government. Men are often hesitant to get involved with groups like this because it implies that you need some help, some companionship that you can't get anywhere else. Of course, that's true for a lot of us, but it's hard to draw men in."

Through support groups and workshops, the parents feel that their self-esteem is nurtured; that there are others who listen to them and encourage them; that they are not alone in facing the pressures of being poor, of losing a job, or of handling domestic conflict. Being a part of these groups requires limited commitment but parents reap immeasurable benefits: they feel a sense of "belonging" and a sense of worth.

The Inn Circle initiative in Cedar Rapids has developed a conceptual framework to convey the importance of **community-building** for families. At the core of this framework is the belief that "families need to be part of supportive relationships with other families, individuals and groups." (Carman, et al., n.d.). Instead of passive clients, they need to become part of community structures that recognize their skills and value their contributions. Some specific activities that flow from this framework include social activities to develop bonds among families, creating a skills/resource exchange that identifies the expertise of participants and enables families to turn to one another for support, and forming parent coops to offer practical group solutions to the needs of working families. Parents have the opportunity to demonstrate their "gifts," a potential that is often overlooked when their children get into the programs because they are "at-risk."

- The Jersey City school district sponsors a SHARE program that allows parents to save money on food in return for community service. In exchange for a few hours of volunteer work in the community every month and a yearly fee of $13, participants receive a coupon entitling them to $35 worth of groceries that they pick up from local churches.

- Sheltering Arms programs link parents with community offerings such as story hour at the library, Little League, a blood drive, voter registration, and elderly care support.

- The Inn Circle program encourages homeless families to develop new friendship networks and join grassroots organizations that match their interests. Through these forms of participation families create a web of supports that will continue after they leave Inn Circle.

These activities widen the network of reciprocity and sense of belonging from the program to the community. Based on the idea of community as "the basic context for enabling people to contribute their gifts" (McKnight, 1987), this approach seeks to "recommunalize" participants, enriching their lives and their communities.

A final strategy which equips parents to contribute to their communities is experience in **decisionmaking**. The majority of agencies invite parents to participate in various forms of policy committees, with responsibilities for giving input to program decisions in areas such as budget and service priorities, evaluation, fundraising and staffing. These committees give parents experience in many skills which they can use as they participate in other community agencies and associations. For example, Parent Services Project sites empower parents by having them manage a small discretionary budget. As a staff member explains:

> "So often when families don't have financial resources, the suspicion is that when you give them an opportunity to determine how money is spent, they'll go out and spend it on frivolous things. That was not the case. One center set up a $2000 revolving loan fund which parents could apply to, for needs such as care repairs, fixing plumbing, or buying school clothes, and after ten years, we still have $1800." Parents have continued to pay back their obligations even if their children had left the center years before..

Programs report positive carryover from these experiences as parents move out from their agencies. FACE parent meetings attract more participants than regular PTA meetings in some communities. In one BIA school, 14 of 16 parents participating in a training session for middle school parents were alumni of the FACE project. Or, as a former parent in the Jersey City, New Jersey program said:

> "We got involved in the parent committee at our school and the Parent Council President began to say,'Those prekindergarten parents are something else. They just get in there and take charge you know?'"

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: FUNDRAISING AND BUILDING HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

These seven managers work in different types of organizations in terms of history, size, complexity, and structure. Their agencies range from the century-plus heritage of Sheltering Arms to initiatives such as FACE and Covington, Kentucky's center, which have been in business for only a few years. Some projects are sophisticated multi-million dollar enterprises, while others operate smaller, less complex operations. Four managers are executives in independent, non-profit organizations, two are middle-level managers within school systems, and one is a teacher-director who works with children as well as handling administrative duties. However, regardless of their job setting, early childhood administrators balance energy and attention between two central functions:

- Raising money and managing relationships with varied government agencies and private sector supporters.

- Providing leadership to program quality, primarily through nurturing, training, setting standards and inspiring the efforts of program staff members.

The Context of Program Management: Competing Audiences & Design Dilemmas

Our present public system for funding early childhood programs involves a variety of sponsoring agencies; a varied set of categorical, discretionary funding streams; and a lack of entitlement by families or institutions. Analysts count as many as ninety different federal funding streams, in agencies as disparate as the IRS, the Departments of Education, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services. (Government Accounting Office, 1989) The programs are diverse as to the form of service they provide, the target group of children and families, and the mechanisms which are used to allocate and disburse resources. Two other central features of early childhood funding are that programs serve only a portion of the total eligible families and children which fall within their definition of need, and fiscal commitments are discretionary. Thus, local agencies continue only if they are successful in competitive public funding. By contrast, our nation's K-12 education system presumes that every child is entitled to a free education, regardless of where they live or their family's income, and school districts enjoy permanent legal status and dedicated sources of public revenue.

Along with a competitive, complex funding environment, managers face dilemmas in designing program services and staffing systems. As detailed in research findings cited in Chapter II, the core function of nurturing and educating young children requires intensive, responsive practice trained, caring adults. Thus, as described by Gwen Morgan, early childhood policy (and local management) involves a "trilemma" of costs, access, and quality. The trilemma construct posits conflicts among the important goals of keeping costs affordable to parents and government, expanding access to programs, and providing quality which will maximize the healthy development and school readiness of all children. Underlying the trilemma is research which demonstrates that optimizing quality involves a well-trained staff, working within a certain range of ratios of staff:clients. Further, we know that obtaining and retaining a well-trained staff requires competitive salaries. These facts create a set of difficult judgments for local managers as they plan budgets and allocate resources.

We now turn to an analysis of management strategies in the realms of fundraising and fiscal management, and leadership in program quality. We begin by describing three strategies employed by local program leaders in raising and managing funds:

- Managers seek support for agency services from a wide variety of state and federal programs.

- Local leaders mobilize local voluntary and private sector funds to complement public sources of program support and to build community ownership for early childhood services.

- The diversity of revenue sources used by early childhood agencies demands sophisticated management skills by program directors.

Next we will outline three management strategies related to issues of program quality:

- Local managers set the stage for program quality by crafting staffing and compensation systems for their agencies.

- Administrators place a priority on supervision and professional development and supervision as central strategies in building quality front-line services.

- Early childhood administrators are leaders in promoting quality services beyond the boundaries of their own agencies.

Program Management Strategies

1. Managers seek support for programs services from a wide variety of state and federal programs.

> "About three years ago, we started facing a deficit because the Department of Education funding was not increasing but our costs were escalating. We looked into diversifying our funding base and we have succeeded in a proposal for a comprehensive child care program, and an infant and toddler center. But today, I received a letter from the United Way announcing a potential cut of one-third in their support, so it's like you can't take a step forward without having to take two steps backwards. Instead of being able to focus on the quality of our program, we're always putting out fires which threaten our funding."

Local managers are pressed to work on fundraising for a variety of reasons. While many of these initiatives have expanded substantially in recent years, most still have long waiting lists of families who would like to enroll their children, or requests from communities to create new centers. Another cause for fundraising is the desire to serve different types of community needs or new client groups, such as teen parents or families with infants and toddlers. Finally, managers need to cover increasing costs in the face of level funding from core sources and to anticipate contingencies such as reductions or instability in their present mix of supporters. For example, Child Development Inc. has quadrupled its budget over the last six years, moving from nearly total reliance on federal Head Start funds to a wider range of public, private, and parental fee-based services. Effects of this expansion include:

- **Serving more children.** Head Start funding currently supports 891 children; through their other resources the agency serves more than 1100 additional families.

- **Serving a wider age span of children.** While Head Start focuses on services to three- and four-year-olds, CDI's other funding sources allow them to provide programs for children from infancy through school age.

- **Serving children from families with a wider range of incomes.** Head Start eligibility is based on federal poverty guidelines, while CDI's participation in other state and federal programs allows partially-subsidized service for families with incomes up to $26,000, as well as openings for more affluent families through their fee-based child care option. This shift increases the diversity of children in classrooms and creates a greater sense of serving entire communities, rather than only children "at-risk".

- **Addressing special needs and populations.** Diversifying funding allows agencies to create new forms and components of services to meet a wider range of family needs, as in CDI's home-based, family literacy, teen parent and family day care home service programs.

Child Development, Inc. has learned how to sustain a service strategy over time by using different sources of funding. They have provided home-based programs since the mid-1970s with a sequence of support including federal Head Start funds, Arkansas-based foundations, the Department of Labor's Job Training Partnership Act, and, most recently, the state's Act for Better Child Care Program. Similarly, the Sheltering Arms agency has been able to access a new state department of education preschool program to fund classrooms for 4-year-olds which in prior years absorbed United Way and other core agency funds. As the state department of education funds have come into the agency, resources previously directed towards this age group have been shifted towards younger children.

Directors confront a fiscal environment with elements of stability and uncertainty. When new state or federal programs are announced (such as recent initiatives in Kentucky and Arkansas or Project FACE in the Bureau of Indian Affairs), managers know that their proposals will be competing with many other contenders. However, once an agency establishes a relationship with a state or federal program, chances are that funding will be continued in the future, assuming that performance is satisfactory. For example, Head Start continuation funds are guaranteed for incumbent grantees as long as they pass muster in their fiscal audits and compliance with performance standards as assessed by external monitoring teams. However, managers also need to be alert to signs of restructuring or new priorities within existing funding streams. As one manager comments, the episodic nature of competition leads to a stance of eternal "vigilance":

> "Fundraising is a big source of pressure for me. The Board of Directors expects me to do it. I never know when one source of funds will drop off and create a need to find new support for programs, staff and services. For example, coming up in our fourth year of Even Start is a shift in management from the federal to the state level, and we're worried that this will increase the competition for those funds. Another huge change we weathered was when the state changed its system for funding child care from provider contracts to individual vouchers. We thought the change would wipe us out, but we've ended up with four times as much revenue as we had under the contract system."

Administrators employ a variety of strategies in raising money. They seek involvement in state, regional, and national conferences, advisory groups, and proposal review assignments to learn about potential new sources of revenue and the interests of decisionmakers. They create collaborative relationships, learn to accept a pattern of hits and misses in submitting proposals, and take the view that persistence will eventually be rewarded:

> "Our literacy coordinator served on a health committee in Dardanelle some six years ago, looking at teen pregnancy problems. We tried to fund a project through a federal Sex Equity program and then through vocational education as a non-traditional school. Neither of those routes panned out, so we are now using those ideas and relationships to approach a new Rockefeller Foundation initiative."

The combination of a varied set of funding sources and entrepreneurial local managers leads to a developmental pattern as agencies mature, beginning with initiation through a single state or federal program, and expanding to offer a more diverse array of services by gaining access to a wider range of public and private funding sources. Examples of the initial pattern of funding include FACE initiatives, depending on Bureau of Indian Affairs support, and Covington, which relies primarily on state department of education dollars. More mature agencies include Child Development, Inc. with 15 different funding sources; Inn Circle, with some 20 federal, state and local "investors", and Sheltering Arms, with dozens of private and public contributors. Elaine Draeger, Executive Director at Sheltering Arms explains an added benefit of diversified funding, which is greater local autonomy in designing program services and definitions of program quality:

> "Other agencies ask how we can afford to provide our range of services and level of quality. Our position is you don't design your program based on the resources which are available; rather you go out and raise funds to support your vision of quality. And you realize that no single funding source will do it."

Programs in this study seek to go "beyond the usual suspects" in seeking early childhood funding. Agencies are seeking support from economic development agencies, job training and vocational education programs, and welfare reform initiatives. For example, the Inn Circle enterprise illustrates the potential for expanding early childhood services within a larger community development/family service strategy. The largest funding source for Inn Circle is HUD's Supplemental Assistance to Aid the Homeless fund. Child care for the preschool population is funded by a combination of Head Start, state at-risk child care funds, state department of education preschool program, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant program. Head Start funds two family living counselors for the overall adult development strategy; a Department of Human Service Family Protection Fund supports additional home visiting staff for Head Start.

By selecting agencies known for their quality and innovativeness, this study uncovered many success stories in fundraising. However, even these experienced, relentless marketing experts encounter difficulties. For example, a coalition of foundations in Northern California gave birth to the Parent Services Project (PSP) strategy and continued their support over a substantial time span to refine program strategies, conduct an impact evaluation, and create materials and strategies to disseminate the model in other settings. PSP Director Ethel Seiderman and colleagues led three successful campaigns to pass legislation for state funding, but the bills were vetoed by three different governors. PSP has experienced good success in funding from national foundations to replicate their model in other states and communities. However, some of the original program sites have struggled in efforts to sustain a full range of PSP family support services.

The competitive funding market can also have a detrimental effect on relationships among different community agencies serving young children. The Covington program and several FACE sites have experienced some tensions in relationships with Head Start, due to competition for similar target groups of families.

2. Managers mobilize local voluntary and private sector funds to complement state and federal program support and to enhance community ownership of early childhood services.

All agencies in this study involve parents in fund-raising to help supplement budgets, to give parents the opportunity to contribute to the agency, and to develop organizational and social skills which strengthen parents as potential employees and community members. Child Development, Inc. keeps accounts on roughly $1 million in various forms of in-kind contributions and volunteer services each year. Covington draws the majority of its nonworking parents into its substantial training program in how to volunteer in an early childhood classroom, and receives over 3000 days of volunteer service annually. Inn Circle operates its infant-toddler child care center as a parent cooperative, since public funds are insufficient to provide quality staffing for the range of hours of operation which parents require.

Agencies also draw on local community resources to complement state and federal program resources. For example, Inn Circle has also placed a premium on soliciting resources and contributions from local groups, to give residents a stake in the initiative and exposure to the problems of homelessness. Local companies and voluntary organizations were invited to donate $2000 in cash or 1000 hours in volunteer time to cover renovation costs of a single apartment unit. Sponsor organizations are recognized by plaques on the doors of each apartment.

The Jersey City early childhood initiative was begun with state department of education resources, but has expanded primarily through increased allocations of local school funds for staffing and facilities. The first year (1989-90) enrollment of 150 children was funded by New Jersey's Urban Preschool Pilot Program, but by 1992 local district funds were supporting 310 slots while the state dollars covered only 99 children. Program Coordinator Pat Noonan helped build the case for local funding by holding a highly publicized annual lottery for parents seeking to enroll their children in her program. Another important strategic decision was to allow all children in the community to be eligible to participate in locally-funded classrooms. The lottery began in 1990, when 350 families applied to enroll in four classrooms funded by the local school district. In recent years, more than 700 parents have applied to participate in the district program, which offers approximately 300 slots. This method assures parents that decisions are made on an equitable basis, but it also dramatizes the demand for early care and education to community and school leadership. The Jersey City school district has also made major investments in facilities, including $300,000 to renovate two apartments in a public housing project to use as classrooms. Similarly, the Covington Public Schools spent $1.8 million to purchase and renovate a facility for its early childhood program and the school system provides in-kind fiscal management, transportation, and maintenance services to the program.

The Sheltering Arms agency illustrates the potential of a sophisticated strategy to draw on corporate and private sector resources. As a founding member of the United Way, the agency has a history of connections with corporate leaders and local foundations. They employ a former board member as a consultant to seek out resources from local foundations and corporations, a task which involves some 64 different businesses, 26 local foundations and more than $350,000 in funds in 1993. Sheltering Arms uses its United Way funding to support its central administrative operation and for a scholarship fund which bridges the gap between the rates of reimbursement from public vouchers and parental fees and the costs of Sheltering Arms services. Scholarships are awarded to all but 80 of the agency's 1300 families, ranging from a $10 per week subsidy for families earning above $50,000 per year and upwards to $75 per week for families with incomes below $11,000 annually, against average tuition rates of $100 per week. Sheltering Arms helped to initiate a particularly innovative public-private partnership among area corporations, the United Way and the state's welfare reform initiative, Positive Employment and Community Help (PEACH). Corporate funds were solicited to increase the state government's ability to draw on matching funds for child care from the federal government. $150,000 from the private sector was donated through the United Way to county human service offices, allowing an increase of roughly $400,000 in child care services following the federal matching contribution. Sheltering Arms served an additional 53 children through this arrangement and also trained 12 PEACH participants for employment in child care.

Several managers in these programs spend considerable time working to raise funds to purchase or construct facilities, concentrating on HUD and economic development funding sources as well as local corporations. The agency gains more attractive and appropriate space and reduces costs for renting or leasing space from other owners (e.g. Sheltering Arms spent $250,000 to rent facilities in 1993).

Private sector resources offer an income stream to complement parental fees and public funding and create important community connections with early childhood services. On the other hand, the success of individual agencies has not led to community-wide improvements in the quality and availability of early childhood services. For example, while the United Way of metropolitan Atlanta funds a variety of child care agencies, they cannot afford to subsidize every early childhood program to the extent that they support Sheltering Arms.

3. The diversity of revenue sources used by early childhood agencies demands sophisticated management skills by program directors.

Early childhood managers contend with a "hassle factor" of administrative complexity and a "hustle factor" of competition in dealing with the current constellation of early childhood funding streams. Diversification of funding sources creates administrative complexity as an agency creates commitment to multiple sources, each with different timelines, reporting and refunding requirements, definitions of eligibility, and standards for allowable and quality services. Administrators need to juggle the requirements of different external funders, and work to prevent
the possibility of balkanizing the overall agency mission and fragmenting services.

When early childhood agencies capture resources from parent fees, a voucher system managed by their local department of welfare, Head Start funding from a federal regional office, contributions from local corporations, and United Way funds, managers must learn the intricacies of very different systems of funding, as well as how to combine resources in supporting common program services. These challenges begin with recruitment of families, determining eligibility for the funding source which is most relevant to family needs and most advantageous to the program:

> "Our biggest frustration is figuring out how to help families work through the different requirements and eligibility standards for all the different child care funding streams. We need more systematized eligibility. Why can't a family have one case manager for PEACH, Transitional Child Care, Title IVA At-Risk Child Care, food stamps and the Child Care Block Grant? Right now, the different case workers don't even talk to each other.

Since agencies combine children from different programs in the same classrooms, managers also need to calculate the overall mix of funding sources across a center:

> "I look at the amount of income from different human service child care voucher programs that each center was able to earn last year, then plug in the likely contributions from parental fees. Then I work with the numbers so that I can provide the maximum amount of scholarships for those families who are most at risk and still balance my budget. Each center director receives an annual budget which we track through a weekly report on revenue and enrollment. We make adjustments in staffing patterns and hours based on enrollment and if a family is really in a bind, we will know if we can lower their fee temporarily and still be okay."

Fee-based revenue sources, such as child care vouchers and parental fee income require careful monitoring by program managers:

> "Child care voucher reimbursement rates vary by county, based on the average rates charged by centers in each county. Since we maintain the same salary scale and staffing pattern in all centers, we 'make' or 'lose' money in different sites due to differential rates. Each voucher must be billed individually and we must be on time with our reports or we'll go broke in a hurry!"

Administering multiple categorical programs also creates complications in the areas of supervising staff and services:

> "The Department of Human Services will not reimburse us for the costs of all the services we provide in Head Start, and families who pay fees aren't going to pay for all these things either. So our assessment system for upper income families only covers basic health and child development questions, while Head Start families are asked for more detailed information on social service and other family needs and goals."

Different programs also have different standards for quality services in areas such as staff credentials and staffing patterns. For example, Head Start's guidelines for home-based early childhood services call for a staff:family ratio of 1:10; the Even Start program allows ratios of 1:20; and Arkansas's state early childhood initiative uses a standard of 1:15.

Finally, directors struggle to maintain an overarching sense of mission among staff funded from a variety of sources:

> "We need to work hard to keep our staff cohesive under the CDI umbrella. We learned in the early 1970s in demonstration projects that the 'feds' try to split you off by having separate conferences, technical assistance and guidelines. We stress teamwork through common staff training, our overall mission statement, and using a single director for each center who manages staff funded from different programs."

4. Program managers set the stage for program quality by crafting staffing patterns and compensation systems for their agencies.

The most crucial choices of local managers involve setting up staffing and compensation systems. These choices are shaped by external mandates in staff:child ratios, credentials, and service components, and indirectly by rates of funding. However, local administrators have considerable discretion in how they meet standards for the quality, frequency and intensity of services.

> "Our staffing strategy has been to not hire custodians or bus drivers -- nor do we have a large staff of family service workers at the center level. We expect the center staff to do more things and then we can pay them more."

Projects also vary in the caseloads they set for family support staff and their approach to the dimension of intensity of services, e.g. policies on the frequency of home visits.

Agencies also take different approaches in levels of compensation and credentials for staff members. For example, Covington, Kentucky school district's partnership with Children, Inc., calls for the child care agency to hire, supervise, and pay the classroom staff, using a compensation system which is less costly than the salaries and fringe benefits paid by the school district. Teachers under the Children, Inc. subcontract earn $18,250 per year (rates similar to those paid to staff under Children, Inc.'s other child care programs). In contrast, a special education teacher is carried at a salary level of $24,752 on the Board of Education's portion of the budget. This arrangement has allowed Covington to devote more resources to parent training and activities -- a choice which they believe has increased the effectiveness of their center. By contrast, in Jersey City, the school district compensates preschool teachers on the same salary schedule as regular elementary school staff members.

Another factor in the design of compensation systems is the market of opportunities for staff offered in other early childhood agencies, as noted by a local child care director:

> "Our salaries are not commensurate with schools or other agencies. Within the past two years I have lost several key employees to Head Start, which has caused a lot of consternation. They can work part-time for Head Start and make as much or more than they make working full-time in our centers."

Another major challenge for managers administering multiple programs is how to resolve disparities in rates of reimbursement as they affect staff compensation. For example, for Child Development, Inc., their per child revenue from child care vouchers is substantially less generous than Head Start funding rates. In response, they have created an eight-tiered system of teaching staff positions, with wages ranging from $4.30 to $11.20 per hour, with categories at the lower levels supported by child care voucher revenue (capped at roughly $6.50/hour), and the higher paid positions via Head Start. New staff members tend to enter employment at the lower levels of qualifications and move up the ladders over time. This strategy allows teachers to continue working in one agency and allows CDI to retain experienced staff. However it has the detrimental effect of creating higher rates of staff turnover in infant-toddler classrooms funded from child care voucher revenue.

5. Administrators place a priority on professional development and supervision as central strategies in building quality front-line services.

The skills and dedication of staff members are the lifeblood of early childhood services. For example, the FACE program in Torreon, New Mexico serves many teenage mothers with a staff of home visitors who are young mothers from the community. They serve as credible role models when they encourage parents to pursue an education. They go the extra mile in recruiting families who lack telephones and they brave difficult road conditions to reach homes every week:

> "One mom's house was cold and she had young kids and a baby, so we brought her a truckload of wood, which we chopped ourselves."

This level of commitment can't be defined by a job description or inculcated in a training package. However, agency systems for hiring, training, supervising, and managing staff are a key lever in influencing program quality.

> "Sheltering Arms is good to their employees, they treat us as professionals. It's important for parents and children to have continuity in relationships, so it's important for the staff to not be gypsies. The training the staff receive keeps them feeling valued, gives them a reason to stay and helps them work better in different situations."

Each early childhood program provides substantial staff development because many staff members enter the field without extensive college training or certification. The prevalence of on-the-job training and a career ladder approach to staffing distinguishes most early childhood programs from the public schools:

> "It's very difficult to hire staff with teaching certification at the salaries we're able to pay. Either we have people who are almost overqualified in education, but lacking experience with young children, or they don't even have a high school diploma. So we've developed our own in-service training program that essentially allows us to take individuals with little prior training and within two years to qualify them for a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. We've also used the CDA strategy with staff who had been with us for many years and had participated in years of training, but who had earned no credential."

Even those agencies that rely on certified teachers include extensive professional development, as can be seen in the example of Jersey City Public Schools. New Jersey's present teacher credentialing system includes a birth-grade 8 certificate, which has led to job candidates with little experience in working with children below the age of 5. Accordingly, staff in the Jersey City program participate in at least ten days of training per year, including a week-long summer institute.

Agency managers attempt to optimize their use of training resources from across different programs and funding streams:

> "We try to coordinate training agency-wide. For example, we have three major infant-toddler programs with staff in different locations. The Parent-Child Center funding provides the most generous support for professional development, so we open all their events to the entire staff. For home visitors, every other Friday we have a full day of training on topics like paperwork, personal skills, child abuse, spouse abuse or problems such as a father making sexual advances. We've also started a mentor system among our ten home visitors who are funded by Head Start."

Early childhood programs also support staff and strengthen program quality through oversight and support from peers and supervisors. Agencies also use their experienced teachers as mentors for newer staff. Evaluations are carried out by local center directors, based on an observational system which teachers also use to rate themselves and their peers. Smaller programs such as FACE have the advantage of working with a small staff team in small communities. Weekly staff meetings of a half-dozen people allow a high level of exchange of information about children and parents and opportunities to make decisions collaboratively. Larger agencies have a more complex challenge to provide oversight and consistency in a large number of geographically dispersed centers. For example, Sheltering Arms has a small central office team of eight people to oversee its network of 11 local centers, with a total of more than 200 staff members:

> "When I first came here we had only three or four centers and now we are about to have 12. So it's difficult to observe regularly at each site. The majority of my time is spent doing centralized training. We try to use surveys and observational checklists to see if our training is making a difference. However, center directors are the primary people who work with teachers in implementing the education program."

Child Development, Inc. uses a similar approach and also supports consistency in program quality through a voluminous procedures manual, containing forms and guidelines for functions, ranging from recruitment to behavior management to food services. They balance the values of consistency and flexibility through emphasizing the role of local site managers:

> "Our current emphasis is to give center directors and home visitor supervisors more management responsibility. We eliminated a tier of center supervisors from our central office and used the savings to increase salaries of center directors. We work one-on-one with them as much as possible, emphasizing leadership development through modeling a coaching perspective. If we see recurrent patterns of problems, we try to ask why."

The central staff includes specialists in component areas such as health, mental health, education, special education and family support. This team works to oversee and support the local site managers:

> "We have a weekly meeting of all coordinators, reviewing each center which has been visited with observations on strengths or concerns. We use a written form to follow up with center directors. Once a month we meet with the center directors and hear from them and every year we have a management retreat for about 50 managers and supervisors."

Covington operates with an innovative dual management team and deals with a staff which has increased from 23 to 50 members in the first year. A two-day planning retreat is held annually to involve all the staff in creating a framework of program needs, priorities and a calendar of major events. The program holds weekly staff meetings to provide a mixture of information, inspiration and group decisionmaking. In addition, family advocates and teachers meet weekly for lunch to discuss observations and information about individual children and their parents. Covington also involves staff members in planning and decisionmaking. For example, when the Superintendent wanted to pilot a new computer and software system, he met with the staff to ask their views.

6. Early childhood administrators are leaders in promoting quality services beyond the boundaries of their own agencies.

As busy and difficult as their jobs are, many of the program directors included in this study contribute to improving early childhood practice in wider realms. Sheltering Arms in Atlanta has created the IN TRAINING subsidiary to disseminate curriculum materials and provide training and technical assistance to staff from 400 early childhood programs in Georgia and neighboring states. The Parent Services Project has developed training materials and a dissemination strategy to support spread of the PSP program in other communities and settings. Foundation funding has led to implementation of PSP strategies in family child care, Head Start, public school and teenage parent programs in five states.

Local managers also serve their profession and spread their ideas and influence through a variety of personal contributions. They serve as officers and board members in state, regional and national organizations; they deliver conference presentations, serve on monitoring teams, review proposals; and participate in research and evaluation projects. Chris Carman and colleagues at Inn Circle have written several articles and position papers to share principles and strategies with colleagues; Colleen Alivado and several staff members have been tapped as part of a cadre of peer trainers to work with newly-funded FACE projects; Elaine Draeger contributes to United Way strategies and standards which influence other child care agencies in the Atlanta area. For example, all early childhood agencies funded by the area United Way were charged with developing a collective approach to addressing program assessment:

> "The United Way proposed to use a pretest/post-test design to assess children's progress, so we went through a long process explaining the weaknesses of that design for young children. Our push from the beginning was to utilize NAEYC's Center Accreditation standards. Initially there was hostility to our proposal, but in the end we agreed on a goal for all agencies to be accredited within three years."

POLICY INFLUENCES IN LOCAL AGENCIES

The preceding sections highlight patterns of innovative strategies by staff members and local agency directors working with young children and families. Across the country, in Head Start, child care and school-based initiatives, we found the following:

- Teachers working in a framework of developmentally appropriate classroom practices to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse set of children, incorporating parents as integral participants in classrooms, and struggling to sustain their careers in the face of minimal financial incentives and limited professional development opportunities.

- Early childhood agencies maintaining an amazing array of services, supports, and relationships with parents and family members. Building from their connections with children, staff members encourage parents to increase their skills in supporting child development and learning, in progress in education and employment, in obtaining health, housing and other forms of public services, and in learning to participate in and contribute to their communities.

- Program managers serving as crucial mediators between the world of public policy and the daily engagement of staff members with children and families. Rather than passive implementors of state and federal programs, local administrators are public entrepreneurs, combining resources from a variety of public and private sources and creating new service strategies.

In this section, we discuss findings on how state and federal resources and program practices are influence these seven local programs. We discuss early childhood policy from three angles: as a financing system, as a system for enhancing local program quality, and as an example of federal-state-local relationships.

A Context For Analysis

We will discuss early childhood policy from three perspectives:

- **Financing local services.** One lens for interpreting early childhood policy is to focus on how resources are allocated and distributed. Presumably, an effective financing system would be equitable and efficient, supportive of quality services and outcomes, and would include incentives for complementary investments from local and private sources. Another desirable feature for a funding system is "transparency" (Barnett, 1993) -- that is, allowing decisionmakers and citizens to easily understand key options and effects of funding decisions.

- **Enhancing local program quality.** A second perspective in gauging early childhood policy is to view government's role in protecting consumers and leading local agencies to provide effective and high quality services to children and parents.

- **Promoting effective federal-state-local partnerships.** A third angle for policy analysis is intergovernmental relationships. Here we consider questions of the appropriate balance of authority and responsibility among federal, state, and local decisionmakers; whether external mandates unduly burden or restrict local programs; and whether there are appropriate forums for decisionmaking and communication within and across levels of government.

Policy Effects in Local Early Childhood Agencies

1. Financing: Our present levels of investment are inadequate to support equitable access or quality service; the present system of multiple categorical programs is complex and confusing for local practitioners and policymakers.

Public funding has powerful effects on these local agencies. Six of the seven programs are direct creations of a state or federal program and rely on public funding streams for the majority of their revenue. Local administrators are extremely alert and responsive to signals about changes in the availability of current and new resources. As an initial example, there are important consequences from the "packaging" of resources, in terms of definitions of eligibility, and mandatory features and forms of program services. For example, Head Start services are targeted to three- and four-year-old children from low-income families, while various child care funding streams focus on low-income working families and welfare recipients. These attributes of programs shape the initial design of local initiatives and the ongoing core of continuing services.

From the experience of these seven local agencies, we see three fundamental problems in our present system of funding early childhood services:

> - **Limits on enrollment** - Waiting lists are a quiet but powerful source of pressure in today's early childhood agencies. In the majority of these agencies, agile, entrepreneurial administrators have been successful in expanding enrollments and forms of services. However, in spite of impressive rates of expansion, agencies continue to experience waiting lists larger than their levels of enrollment. Thus, our present set of state and federal early childhood programs constitute a "union of insufficiencies". No single program is funded to serve more than a fraction of the eligible clients and the cumulative total of public investment fails to provide equal access to services for children from low-income families.
>
> - **Inadequate support for program quality** - Rates and formulas for disbursing funds are often inadequate to support a quality teaching workforce and fall well below the actual costs of delivering comprehensive, quality services (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 1990, Willer, 1990). In addition, local agencies have difficulty in reconciling differing stances on quality and differing rates of reimbursement across different agencies. These local directors have adapted creatively by supplementing public early childhood funding streams with corporate, foundation, economic development and private resources. These extra resources allow programs to attract and retain well-trained teachers and provide family support and involvement services. However, even these agencies struggle every year to maintain their complex mix of revenue sources.
>
> - **Complexities in managing multiple programs** - These agencies have learned the craft of obtaining and managing multiple resources. However, the diversity of public funding streams makes it costly and complicated for local managers in terms of proposal preparation, reporting, accounting, compliance with standards, and crafting a coherent approach to program services and staffing.

Beyond these detrimental effects in local agencies, our present fragmented funding system makes it hard to gauge our present status in working towards such universal commitments as assuring school readiness for all children. It is difficult to track the effects of public investment, since decisions are made in a number of disconnected forums and at multiple levels of our governance system. Leaders at the community, state, or federal level are unable to size up how present resources are allocated towards children of different ages, families of different incomes, and among programs with different forms of service. Confusion about the cumulative effects of present funding makes it difficult to discern how best to allocate additional resources when they become available. Multiple programs can also lead to charges, difficult to prove or disprove, that the multiplicity of programs may lead to duplication of effort and unnecessary administrative costs.

Thus, as a funding system, early childhood programs provide inadequate levels of investment, via an overly complex and opaque structure of funding streams. The availability and quality of services to local families depends heavily on the skill and effort of local managers, rather than as a result of a predictable and equitable system of public finance.

2. Enhancing Quality: Fragmented authority and inconsistent standards are major weaknesses in our current approach to encouraging quality improvement in local efforts.

Viewed from the top, our nation has a flimsy, inconsistent patchwork of policies regarding the quality of early childhood services. Early childhood services are delivered by schools, Head Starts, child care centers, family day care homes, nursery schools, church-based and for-profit enterprises. While very young, vulnerable children spend the majority of their waking hours in child care, there are no consistent policies to safeguard children against abuse, nor to support the ingredients of environments which will optimize development and learning. There are several major weaknesses:

- **Multiple sources of policy**. Head Start programs are governed by performance standards set at the federal level, school-based prekindergarten programs by policies set by state departments of education, services to children with disabilities via a set of federal procedural mandates, and child care centers by licensing standards set by state departments of welfare. This structure makes it hard to coordinate consistent standards.

- **Inconsistent/inadequate standards.** Policies in key areas such as staff qualifications, group size/adult:child ratios, and provision of health services and parent involvement vary widely among states and different types of early childhood programs. For example, school-based programs tend to require teachers with BA degrees and certification; Head Start classroom staff tend to be credentialed through the Child Development Associate program, a national competency-based training and assessment system; and 36 of 50 states require no prior training for staff working in child care centers. Early childhood special education services and Head Start programs are governed by detailed mandates on parent involvement while other forms of programs have few policies covering this important component. States vary as well on key determinants of quality such as ratios of staff to children (Adams, 1990).

- **Exemptions from coverage by policy.** The Children's Defense Fund estimates that 43% of all children in out-of-home care are in settings which are not covered by any system of public regulation or monitoring (Adams, 1990). These exemptions occur most often for programs operated by religious organizations and smaller home-based child care providers.

In spite of these structural weaknesses, we found evidence that state and federal policies can have positive effects on program quality in these agencies: both in setting the initial stance of programs on quality and staffing and in supporting improvements over time:

- One impressive instance of how external policies enhance program quality is the Bureau of Indian Affair's FACE project. Each local project is supported by substantial funds for training, technical assistance, and external evaluation. The resources support two on-site visits annually of training consultants from the National Center for Family Literacy, Parents As Teachers, and the High/Scope Research Foundation -- as well as two annual conferences of the full set of FACE sites and staff members. Given the fact that most FACE projects have a staff of 5-8 people, this combination of supports provides sustained, intensive opportunities for one-to-one observation, modeling, coaching, and feedback for every front-line staff member. FACE sites also receive considerable attention, via reports, phone calls, and monitoring visits from their BIA Project Officer; and an external evaluation contractor which provides individual site reports on progress and problems. The FACE strategy shows that federal administrators can do more than simply proclaim high standards; the tools of training, technical assistance, monitoring, and networking across programs can be employed to build local capacity to meet standards.

- Jersey City, New Jersey, and Covington, Kentucky's programs also illustrate the positive influence of state standards on quality. For example, New Jersey Department of Education guidelines required Jersey City to recruit staff with early childhood training and experience; to employ coordinators for health services, social services, and parent involvement; to provide a substantial, sustained professional development program for prekindergarten, kindergarten and primary grade teachers; and to create a policy advisory board including parent representatives and community agencies. When Jersey City expanded their program, using local school district resources, they continued to adhere to the state's guidelines for program quality. Similarly, Kentucky's complementary state initiatives to create prekindergarten programs, family support centers in public schools, and ungraded primary units created the context for Covington's comprehensive local early childhood initiative.

These local examples also show that program quality is shaped powerfully by influences at the local level. Federal and state policies also allow local agencies flexibility to chart their own approaches in forms of service and approaches to defining and supporting quality:

- A number of these organizations have determined to adhere to higher levels of standards than are represented by governmental policy. For example Sheltering Arms upholds staff to child ratios which are substantially more favorable than the state licensing requirements. They use ratios of 1:4 for infants, while the state allows up to 1:6; and 1:10 for preschoolers, while the state allows up to 1:18. Similarly, Sheltering Arms' commitment to family support coordinators in each center is not required by state or federal policies -- in fact, costs for this staff are not reimbursable in child care funding streams.

- When organizations are creating new forms and combinations of services, they are operating in territory uncharted by detailed regulations. For example, Inn Circle's initiative combines a wide range of services, including early childhood and parent education within an overarching philosophy of building community among homeless women. Similarly, the Parent Services Project is working to infuse a new philosophy and component of family support services in child care agencies which have traditionally taken a more limited approach to working with parents.

- As agencies mature, the challenge of complying with relatively stable state and federal program standards becomes less demanding. For example, most Head Start grantees have more than 20 years experience with federal performance standards and monitoring systems. While there have been periodic additions to these standards, they have been largely unchanged in core areas. Thus seasoned programs have considerable experience in interpreting how to meet the standards.

- Agencies also draw on professional, non-governmental sources in defining and supporting program quality. For example, several local agencies have invested in seeking accreditation of their programs by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which involves a lengthy self-assessment process, followed by an on-site review by a team of peer professionals. Similarly, a majority of these organizations have been involved in staff development services of the High/Scope Research Foundation. Thus, public policy is not the only source of definitions of quality and technical support for local practitioners.

In summary, while current trends in political rhetoric stress the prevalence and problems of costly, obtrusive government regulation, these case studies show that current policies in the early childhood sector have positive effects on local services, but allow considerable local autonomy in shaping programs to local needs and conditions. Program standards promulgated by the government have played an important but measured role in shaping early childhood practice.

These cases also illustrate the considerable potential of federal and state strategies to directly support program improvement efforts. The examples of the Bureau of Indian Affair's FACE program, as well as Head Start management efforts reveal that training, technical assistance, monitoring, and formative evaluation are powerful tools in assisting local agencies in serving children and families well. Unfortunately, this infrastructure of supports is not present in federal child care policy, nor in many state early childhood initiatives (Adams and Sandfort, 1993).

3. Federalism: Early childhood policy reflects a balance of federal, state, and local autonomy. However, there are few forums for coherent federal, state, or local decisionmaking across early childhood programs and funding streams.

Debates on intergovernmental relationships highlight two questions for early childhood policy:

- Are there appropriate mechanisms for governance and decisionmaking?

- Is there appropriate flexibility and deference in policy to the varying needs and conditions of local communities?

These two queries highlight a tension between the values of coherence in policymaking and adaptability and ownership at the community level.

As we have noted, policy decisions about early childhood services occur in a loosely-knit set of separate fiefdoms, including the Head Start policy system, the child care sector, the education for children with disabilities community, and state prekindergarten program structures. Thus, a major weakness of our current governance system is the lack of forums for coherent decisionmaking (Barnett, 1993). Problems of incoherence can be seen in these seven communities as well. These agencies have had impressive success in garnering local funding and contributions. Yet such local investments are limited to supplementing a single agency which is viewed as a creature of the state or federal government. This pattern of contributions falls considerably short of a community-wide vision, design or funding system for early childhood services. There is no structure which provides access to citizens or general purpose government to be engaged in shaping decisions or contributing core support for services to all young children and parents.

Turning to the criteria of an appropriate balance of national, state, and local influence in decisionmaking, what do we see in the evidence from these seven agencies? Drawing together findings on funding and program quality, we see that governmental policy has powerful influence, particularly in the initiation stage of these programs. However, we also found considerable evidence of local initiative and autonomy across these seven programs. Head Start provided a fiscal and organizational base for CDI and Inn Circle's capacity in working with local families, which led to their present larger scale of operations and more diverse and creative forms of service strategy. FACE was crafted at the federal level by combining three national models, yet local sites have uncovered new challenges and innovations within the framework of the model and pushed against the original assumptions of the BIA regarding standards and practices. Initiatives in Covington and Jersey City were created initially as a result of state department of education resources and mandates, yet have been shaped and accelerated by local initiative and funding.

For those concerned with overly intrusive government influence, several features of early childhood services strengthen the voices and rights of local communities and families:

- Attendance is voluntary in early childhood programs.

- Early childhood program funding is discretionary, giving local communities and individual agencies the option to choose not to participate.

- Policies matter, but they are often a distant, indirect presence in the working lives of local early childhood educators. For example, Head Start programs currently receive an on-site monitoring every three years. Visits from representatives of other funding or licensing agencies are typically annual events on a program calendar. By contrast, the priorities and skills of local managers and supervisors are much more active and powerful presence in the working lives of front-line staff members.

Thus, these case studies creates an appreciation for how policy influences and local leadership interact and intertwine in shaping the daily experiences of staff members, children, and parents. There is considerable evidence of the power of state and federal programs to stimulate change in local communities, just as there are multiple examples of local leaders' adaptations within a given program structure and invention of new approaches to supporting children and families.
Local administrators have impressive amounts of discretion to raise money from different sources, to invest in different levels of quality, to combine various forms of subsidies, and to innovate in the ways their programs work with children and families. The skills, ideas and effort put forth by these local managers make a big difference in terms of how many children and families their agencies serve, in how responsive and effective programs are in enhancing child development and family functioning, and in the working environment and career prospects for staff members. However, these case studies also illustrate the power of policy decisions. Public investment sets parameters for local program operations. Multiple early childhood programs, with separate requirements, forms, and levels of support works against the efforts of local managers to provide comprehensive, stable, continuous, and high quality services in local communities. Local managers operate within a zone of discretion, bounded by policy and finance. To put it another way, the innovative strategies of these local leaders come at a price, they have limits, and they may not be uniformly replicable on the part of other early childhood organizations.

CHAPTER VI - ASSESSMENT OF THE OUTCOMES OF REFORMS

Evaluation Strategies
Findings From Evaluation Studies
Findings From Focus Group Interviews
Conclusions

VI. ASSESSMENT OF THE OUTCOMES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD REFORMS

This chapter describes the types of evaluation strategies in use in these seven programs; summarizes evaluation findings; presents teacher and parent perceptions of outcomes; and, concludes with observations about the status of evaluation in early childhood programs.

EVALUATION STRATEGIES

As displayed in the attached table, the study sites participated in a mix of evaluation strategies to help them improve their programs and to document outcomes. Some were part of large, multi-site evaluations and sponsor-driven efforts, such as the FACE programs and Kentucky's Family Resource and Youth Service Centers. The FACE evaluation reports provide extensive site-specific infomation on implementation issues, challenges and accomplishments. The Family Resource and Youth Service Centers evaluation is based on cumulative statewide data from project management information systems and does not provide site-specific findings. The Parent Services Project also completed several evaluation studies funded by local foundations during its early years of program development.

The second type of evaluation strategy in case study sites is small, local, low-budget evaluations contracted out to university affiliates. This strategy was adopted by three sites:

- The Jersey City school district encouraged graduate students from Columbia University to assess the impact of the preschool program on children for their dissertation research. The district is also conducting a self-evaluation and collecting data on outcomes for students, parents, and teachers. Both sets of studies are not yet available.

- Guidelines from Kentucky's early childhood education program specify that local sites should include in their grant proposals an evaluation component. With the help of foundation funds, the Biggs Center commissioned two researchers from the Early Childhood Department, University of Cincinnati to assess the quality of parent-child interactions. The study is in progress and only preliminary summaries have been provided to the program.

- Using HUD funds, an assessment of the Inn Circle initiative provides information about the population served, progress in achieving parent goals, and housing and economic status upon leaving the program. In addition, staff collect Head Start data from tracking forms and external researchers analyze the information. The Head Start evaluation has both formative and outcome components. Researchers from the University of Iowa School of Social Work conduct both evaluations, which are in progress. Periodic summaries of the evaluations are sent to HACAP.

Several other project included in this study were not presently involved in a formal evaluation, although they employed a variety of internal system for tracking the progress of families and children and for reporting to program sponsors and funding sources. For example, Child Development, Inc. reports on 77 recent participants in their Teen Parent Program show that 44 have graduated or completed their GED, 15 are still enrolled in school, and 18 dropped out before completing the program.

TABLE 3

Characteristics of Evaluations in the Program Sites

Program	Sponsorship	Evaluator	Type	Outcome Focus
Biggs Center	Local, state	University	Outcome	Parent-child; child
Child Development, Inc.	Local	Internal	Monitoring	
FACE	Federal	Research firm	Formative, implementation study	Parent; child
Inn Circle	Local	University	Formative, outcome	Family; child
Jersey City	Local	Graduate students	Outcome	Child
Parent Services Project	Foundations	Research firm	Outcome, cost-benefit	Parent
Sheltering Arms	Local	Internal	Monitoring	

FINDINGS FROM EVALUATION STUDIES

Review of interim and final evaluation products reveals a variety of findings on program outcomes:

Parent Services Project (PSP). PSP was the subject of a formal evaluation sponsored by the San Francisco and Marin Community Foundations. The evaluation, conducted by Allen Stein and Associates from 1985 to 1988, focused on the importance of parental support in reducing stress. Using an experimental design, the evaluation examined the extent to which PSP's social support of parents acted as a buffer to reduce stress among low-income parents (Stein and Haggard, 1988). The evaluation did not measure changes in parenting behaviors and child outcomes. The study involved interviews with 169 parents in 20 PSP sites and a control group of 86 similar parents involved in child care centers that were not participating in PSP. Questionnaires about life events and stress, social support, and psychological symptoms were administered to parents upon entry, after 15 months, and finally, after another 15 months, when their children had graduated from the centers. According to the evaluation:

> - PSP parents showed significant decreases in stress over the short-term and in psychological symptoms over the long-term.
>
> - The Project's supportive effects did not strengthen informal networks outside the program.

- Cultural factors influenced the reporting of stress and symptoms.

It concluded that PSP is effective in reducing symptoms of stress; that child care alone was not sufficient to reduce levels of stress and social isolation; and that there were benefits to family support activities in child care settings.

In a follow-up study of sites set up in 1989 and 1990, consultant Molly Haggard found positive effects in the skills and attitudes of staff members and "dramatic increases in parent attendance and involvement activities." In addition, Paul Harder of the URSA Institute in San Francisco examined the cost benefits of PSP, based on state services that would be expended on PSP families had preventive support not been available. He calculated net savings to the state of California of $240 for each family served by PSP.

Family and Child Education (FACE). The FACE evaluation, sponsored by the BIA and conducted by Research and Training Associates (RTA) is an ongoing study of implementation issues. Unlike the PSP evaluation which was outcome oriented, the FACE is a formative evaluation focusing on service delivery. The core of the evaluation is to obtain baseline data for long-term outcome analyses, describe program implementation efforts, and assess the evaluation design to determine its usefulness to the BIA and to make necessary changes (RTA, 1992 & 1993).

The evaluation design calls for on-site data collection in eleven sites by local staff members; it also relies on reports from trainers on the strengths and challenges of implementation, and site visit interviews and observations conducted by the evaluators. Site staff members keep recruitment and activity journals; child and parent enrollment and service information; and child observation assessments and tracking of parents' progress in obtaining a GED, high school credits, or college credits. Some of the early outcome findings from this study are:

- One-third of adults enrolled in the adult education program in 1992 received their GED or high school diploma.

- Children showed improvements on the Child Observation Record, an instrument developed by High/Scope to measure developmental progress.

The evaluation also pointed to broader, less tangible impacts of the program. Based on interviews with staff and parents, the evaluators reported:

- Kindergarten teachers reported that children who had gone through FACE adjusted more readily to kindergarten compared to other children.

- Parents reported improved parenting skills.

- Parents and staff reported an increase in parents' self-worth and confidence, and in parental awareness of the importance of education.

- The program's impact spilled over to the community, in terms of cultural pride, participation of community members in FACE events, and hiring of local people to serve on staff.

- Staff developed new understandings of working with families, team teaching, and their roles as "facilitators of learning."

The evaluation also concluded that the FACE program has evolved into a distinct model through blending and adapting the national models; and that intensive training, unique to this program, is essential to program effectiveness.

J. E. Biggs Early Childhood Center. Given its strong emphasis on parent involvement, it comes as no surprise that the Biggs Center chose to examine outcomes related to parent-child interaction. Data collection involved pre- and post-videotaped sessions of parent-child play sessions with a group of 28 program parents and 20 control group parents who had children in another local child care center without a parent involvement component (McCollum and Yates, 1994). Other data included checklists on child development behaviors and interviews about discipline and teaching strategies. Data are also collected on children's competencies by the time they reach kindergarten. Overall, early findings report positive outcomes of the Biggs Center's family-oriented approach to early education:

- Program parents showed improved interactions with their children compared to the control group.

- The best predictor of the quality of parent-child interactions was the accuracy of the parent's knowledge of her own child's development.

- Although findings were not statistically significant, more program parents showed positive parenting behaviors between pre- and post-interviews.

One useful result of the study was that the control group site has developed a three-year plan to develop parent involvement goals and activities.

Overall, these studies have found modest positive effects on different dimensions of an early childhood programs: PSP, on parent functioning; FACE on adult education completion and child development; and the Biggs Center on parent-child interactions. However, with the exception of PSP, the evaluations are still at preliminary stages and programs await the final results. Also, while programs in our study were comprehensive efforts to serve both children and parents, evaluations assessed child outcomes, parent outcomes, or the interaction of parent and child -- but rarely all three.

Sites reported using evaluation results to support dissemination and replication efforts. The PSP evaluation was instrumental in legislative bills to promote statewide adoption in California and has become a vehicle for national dissemination. It was used by the state of Delaware to secure federal funds for a substance abuse prevention program modelled on PSP. Ethel Seiderman, PSP's director, uses data about the levelling off of parent support networks after parents leave PSP to advocate continued family support activities in the school system. PSP also responds to requests for information about its program by including a summary of the evaluation findings. Similarly, the FACE and Covington evaluations promote scale-up; the FACE program offers information to support its goal of expansion to all 144-BIA funded schools and the Covington directors use evaluation data in workshops for principals and other school administrators to promote a family approach to education in elementary schools and to secure grants for district-wide parent involvement activities.

FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The atmosphere of early childhood agencies is rich with testimonial data on the impact of program services. Interviews with parents reveal impressive anecdotal support of these initiatives. Parents attested to the value of the programs in terms of promoting children's social skills and school readiness, providing parents' with knowledge on their children's development and how to work with them at home, and giving parents' the confidence and skills for their own advancement.

> "PSP helped my daughter to be ready for kindergarten and helped me to be ready to be involved."
>
> "Raising kids out in the sticks where you don't see other kids, sometimes you think they're mentally retarded. When you see other kids their age, it helps."
>
> "When people question the value of subsidized child care, I like to tell them that I am proof that the system does work. It was tough to finish school, work during the daytime and take care of my kids. I can't count the times I turned to my Family Support Coordinator, or the number of times she read my face and knew I needed some encouragement. And when they first drew me into being involved in the parent organization I said, 'I can't do this--stand up in front of a crowd and talk?!' But now I'm a member of the Georgia Child Care Council-appointed because we bombarded the Governor's Office to add a parent representative.'

Similarly, focus groups with staff members elicited their views on the outcomes of program participation. They pointed to success stories in terms of greater parent involvement, improved parent-child interactions, and helping parents achieve their goals.

> "I'm seeing parents learning how to be good listeners to each other in support groups, and then translating that ability to their interactions with their children."
>
> "Our parents started coming to the classroom. They had rarely advocated for bilingual education before, but now they tell us that they like what we do and that they want it to continue."

Testimonies from parents and direct observations of clients' successful progress following participation in early childhood programs have a powerful form of "in your face" validity. However, there are also some risks in using anecdotal evidence: focusing selectively on a top tier of families that represent dramatic "turnaround" examples of program impact; and a lack of disciplined attention to those children and families who drop out or fail to thrive within a program. Furthermore, in the case of child outcomes, it is difficult for parents and staff to separate out the contribution of program experience and the results of normal maturation processes.

CONCLUSIONS

Stepping back from the details of these evaluation strategies and findings, we offer two additional observations from the experience of these seven initiatives. First, the climate of early childhood programs is one where priority lies in direct services rather than issues of infrastructure. There is a dearth of external evaluations and not much technical assistance for developing local self-evaluation tools for program improvement. One speculative explanation for this situation lies in the substantial unmet demand for early childhood services. This fact may also play a role in the perception of local managers on issues of quality, outcomes and accountability. When programs have long waiting lists, managers feel that the value of their services is validated by consumer demand.

Secondly, there is substantial congruence between the design and implementation of these projects and the large body of research literature cited in Chapter II. As noted, the FACE program design is based on three models (Parents As Teachers, National Center for Family Literacy, High/Scope) which have been evaluated, and certified as effective by the Department of Education's Program Effectiveness Panel. Similarly, classroom practices, staffing patterns, and strategies for working with families are guided by research, as embodied in program guidelines and position statements of professional organizations. In this cumulative sense, most local early childhood programs are examples of the utilization of research and evaluation data.

Thus, although we do not have solid information about children's outcomes from these programs, past research has shown that children who participate in high quality early childhood programs benefit in social, emotional and cognitive development. The programs in our study do provide children a stimulating environment and support their families. Based on staff perceptions, children enjoy the programs and children's poor attendance has never been an issue. It is quite likely that these children will show good outcomes as they transition to kindergarten. They stand a better chance of early school success compared to children who do not participate in early childhood programs or in programs of lesser quality.

CHAPTER VII - ASSESSMENT OF THE RESOURCES REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT REFORMS

Financial Resources
Managerial Resources
Staff Resources
Conclusions

VII. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD REFORM

This chapter reviews findings from our case studies and cross-case analysis regarding the resources that are required to implement and sustain reform in the early childhood sector. We discuss three forms of resources: financial, managerial, and staff capacity. The chapter concludes with observations about the interactions among these elements and the supports which are necessary to bring about these different forms of investment.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

An underlying theme in our analysis of these seven programs, and previous research is that our "reform" in serving young children and families can be described as an interlocking set of **quantitative challenges:**

- **Equity in Enrollment Opportunities** - How can we provide equal opportunity for young children to develop, learn, and be prepared appropriately to enter elementary education?

- **Adequate Staff Compensation** - How can early childhood programs support salaries at levels sufficient to attract and retain a well-trained workforce?

- **Comprehensive Program Services** - How can programs support the combination of education, health, parent involvement, and social services which characterize efforts which are successful for both children and families?

- **Appropriate Staff:Client Ratios** - How can programs allow for teachers and family-oriented staff members to work with sufficiently small numbers of clients to allow for high quality, responsive interactions?

- **Continuity in Program Services** - How can programs provide sustained support to families, and to reduce instability in relationships among staff, children and parents?

Each of these key components of early childhood reform has direct implications for the operational costs of local programs and for public finance. The elements of adequate staff compensation, appropriate staff:client ratios, and inclusion of comprehensive services contribute to higher unit costs for serving each child and family. The continuity variable stresses the benefits of providing ongoing support to children and parents throughout the period from birth through school entry, adding the multiple of years of service to the equation. And the challenge of equalizing access to early childhood programs would require additional resources in order to serve more children and families.

To illustrate this contention in another way, consider the contrast between this conception of reform and challenges of reform in public education. The focus of reform strategies for elementary and secondary education is on improving/innovating professional practice at the classroom, school, and district level. The core challenge is one of motivating, guiding, shaking up and modernizing patterns of practice in an established, universal system of public services. Admittedly, equity and adequacy of school finance mechanisms is an eternal issue for litigation and legislation and there are fiscal costs involved in implementing reforms in assessment, instruction, and school organization.

By comparison, the challenge of early childhood reform is to implement a higher standard of "vitamin-enriched" forms of service to a greater segment of young children, at least for those families earning below median income levels. Clearly, funding increases are no guarantee that the quality of program services will be uniformly high. However, resources are an absolutely crucial enabling condition for assuring the opportunity for children and families to participate in a program and for staff to engage productively with their students and parents.

It is difficult to quantify the costs of the reform components outlined above. Several analytic efforts, notably the NAEYC Full Cost of Quality and the Government Accounting Office's research effort have created some estimates of costs per child as benchmarks for the field. Our case study sites illustrate the potential of some local agencies to work creatively to progress towards many of these aims, creating islands of excellence for children, families, and staff members. Evidence from these seven programs offer a few suggestions regarding the costs of reform:

- The Sheltering Arms budget presumes that United Way and other private contributions approaching 30-40% of their costs are required to bridge the gap between the total costs of a comprehensive, quality program and the rates of funding provided by public sources and parent fees.

- These agencies have developed compensation systems (including fringe benefit and professional development opportunities) sufficient to retain a loyal, well-trained cadre of staff members. Actual salary rates vary, due to living costs, rates of compensation in other local education and child care agencies. In general, with the exception of the Jersey City and FACE Projects which pay salaries based on the school district schedule for teachers, programs pay more than the extremely low rates reported in the Child Care Staffing Study but considerably less than salaries of public school staff members.

- The Parent Services Project uses a range of $300-$400 per family per year as a rule of thumb to cover the additional costs of a family support component for existing early childhood programs.

Unfortunately, data about the costs of different forms and levels of quality in early care and education is hard to come by. The multiplicity and separateness of policy, funding, and delivery systems complicate efforts to describe and compare spending patterns across systems. Local agencies also differ in their direct costs and sources of in-kind or subsidized contributions. For example, independent non-profit entities generally pay for their own accounting, insurance, and facility costs, while early childhood programs under the auspices of the public schools receive these services from their local district at no cost. Some agencies invest heavily in purchasing, renting, or renovating facilities, while other programs are able to negotiate for free space for classrooms.

MANAGERIAL RESOURCES

All of the components of early childhood reform could be fully funded and universally mandated through public policy. However, local managers bridge the gap between the components of early childhood reform and out present policy system for early childhood programs. As discussed in Chapter V, local administrators shape the design of their programs, and exert day-to-day leadership to encourage staff quality and innovation in their work. They take the initiative to obtain multiple sources of public funds, and local/private contributions to bridge the gap between what parents can afford to pay and the costs of "reformed version" rates. They make key decisions, and take actions which address each component of the reform agenda at the local level:

- **Equity in Enrollment.** Through their fundraising efforts, they generate additional revenue to expand the enrollment capacity of their agencies. By obtaining access to different state and federal programs and private sector resources, they are also able to widen the range of types of families who can participate in services.

- **Adequate Staff Compensation.** Managers set standards for salaries, fringe benefits, and professional development opportunities and then raise the resources necessary to support these systems.

- **Comprehensiveness in Program Services.** Managers create partnerships with local community agencies to obtain health, housing, employment training and other services for parents, children, and families. They also design their own programs to incorporate family support staff, nurses, and other specialists to complement the core component of early care and education.

- **Appropriate Staff: Client Ratios**. Managers organize staff members and obtain facilities to provide the right conditions for effective teaching and work with families.

- **Continuity in Program Services.** Local administrators seek out additional resources to serve infants and toddlers, to offer full-day, full-year forms of services, and to create linkages with the public schools.

Local managers frequently compete for public resources which have been dedicated to early childhood services. However, they also add to the total pool of resources over time in a variety of ways. As entrepreneurs, they can persuade local foundations and businesses to shift funds towards the early childhood sector. As advocates, they can influence local boards of education to expand investment in programs to serve young children and families.

These different functions call for managers to possess a wide range of talents and attributes. They pay a personal price when they aspire to leadership in an innovative local strategy. Again, as we argued previously, it is more demanding to obtain and manage multiple sources of funding than to serve as an executive in an agency with a single form of sponsorship. A more passive stance of implementing the directives of a single governmental agency is an easier, safer job description. There are undeniable rewards for managers who achieve innovation and excellence -- however they also must be more talented and be willing to work harder and take more risks.

Thus, at present, extra effort by skillful managers can mediate some of the flaws of our public policy and funding system. By raising more money and choosing to create higher quality and more comprehensive programs, managers can enact reform for their children, families, staff members, and communities. Our success in locating a range of exemplary local leaders in this study is heartening. It suggests that investment in leadership development and support could pay impressive dividends in improving program quality and supply. However, it may be unrealistic to assume that unusual levels of talent, dedication, and entrepreneurial ability can be created sufficient to lead every local early childhood center and agency. If we assume that exceptional managers are the exception, rather than the rule, we need to solve much of the early childhood reform problem through governmental action.

STAFF RESOURCES

While funds are vital to allow "reformed" versions of early childhood services to take place, and local administrators are the crucial entrepreneurs to attract and assemble resources, front-line staff are another mandatory resource in quality early childhood strategies. Quality is enacted and embodied in the skill, motivation, creative energy of those closest to children and parents.

Early childhood professionals are guided in their work by position statements, curriculum materials and the content of training programs. However, the diversity of today's young children and the dynamics of classroom life and work with parents are so complex that staff members are called on to make hundreds of autonomous judgments and decisions in their daily work. We aspire to professional practice which is responsive to the unique needs and context of a particular group of children and families; to teaching which is creative rather than routine. It takes extra effort and talent to make personal connections with individual children; to be alert to observing and interpreting their behavior, language, and work; to plan projects and develop materials. Perhaps most of all, excellence in teaching is executed in action, in performance, in fluid and unpredictable interactions with children. Work at high levels of awareness and analysis is stimulating and gratifying. However, it also makes more demands on the personal resources of staff, when compared with practice which is limited to executing routine strategies. It is difficult to quantify the costs of support for this level of quality in practice. Elements of commitment and concern for the client, awareness of a range of alternative courses for activities and alternative teaching or parent support strategies.

Two particular aspects of this conception of reform expand the scope of responsibilities for classroom teachers and are observed in the seven case study sites. First, a commitment to comprehensiveness presumes that teachers will work with parents as well as children. Second, the continuity dimension implies that teachers will take the extra step of learning about and working with public schools to improve the transition process for children and maximize their opportunities for success in kindergarten and the primary grades.

CONCLUSIONS

We see again a set of interconnections among staff capacity, local management, external funding, and infra-structure supports as resources. Achieving reform is possible under a variety of conditions. However, the evidence of these case studies suggests that reform is more rather than less local to occur under the following scenarios:

- Public funding is allocated at rates which support more favorable ratios of staff:clients, more equitable compensation and training for staff, and a full range of components of core services.

- Public policy which reflects high standards for the core conditions of staff:client engagement.

- Local leadership with vision, commitment, a spirit of autonomy and efficacy, an entrepreneurial approach to resource development, and the ability to inspire excellence and commitment on the part of front-line staff members.

- Staff members who are committed to this field, who have access to training, peer interchange, and resources from research and professional communities and who

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therefore take a professional orientation towards service, analysis, invention of new approaches, and self-improvement.

One interpretation of the contribution of fiscal and managerial resources is to create the conditions for staff to implement quality practices, to respond to the changing needs of their clients, and to assess and invent new strategies over time. Instability in staff makes it extremely difficult to implement a consistent approach to curriculum or to garner a well-trained workforce. More serious are the costs to the quality of relationships with children and families. When a center lacks staff continuity it is extremely difficult for children to feel secure or for staff members to get to know their clients well. The agencies profiled in this study have found ways to reverse this cycle. By dint of extra fundraising efforts and a strong commitment to program quality, they create the conditions to allow staff to enact and invent quality practices, rather than struggling in impossible circumstances.

We also offer the speculation that the pattern of successful fundraising from multiple sources characteristic of these flagship agencies serves as to bolster staff morale and motivation among front-line staff. Beyond the tangible benefits of successful fundraising, we believe that agency staff members garner a feeling that they are part of something special rather than merely employees of an ordinary service agency. Participants in an organization which is expanding and diversifying operate in a climate which encourages them to stretch and expand themselves in their daily work and in their vision for the future. New programs also offer a wider range of job opportunities for staff members. Staff members also take note of other forms of recognition for the organization that they work for, such as recognition in professional networks, media coverage, doing presentations, and receiving awards. They carry these agency achievements with them when they meet with colleagues from other programs in forums at the community, state, and national levels.

At a more general level, support for excellence and innovation in early childhood programs depends on issues of status and recognition. If, through low pay, lack of public recognition, and media images, early childhood professionals are continually defined as "less than" the status accorded teachers of older children or other occupational roles, talented individuals may well be less likely to enter and stay in this field of endeavor -- or practitioners may be more likely to simply view their work as "only a job". While the intrinsic rewards of facilitating progress for children and families may be high, long-term inequities are bound to have an impact on career decisions as well.

CHAPTER VIII. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Policy Implications
Implications for Improving Practice

VIII. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

In this chapter, we discuss the lessons from these seven exemplary programs for improving our early childhood system -- both from the top in terms of policy and funding decisions and at the community level in terms of management and practice strategies. To set the stage for these recommendations, we begin with a brief reminder about the strengths and limitations of data from exemplary local programs.

A familiar adage in government observes that "where you stand depends on where you sit." In the realm of qualitative policy research, this saying could be translated as "what you see depends on what you decide to look for." These accounts of local practice are selective because all the programs were chosen based on their reputation for excellence and innovativeness. This attribute provides several strengths as a basis for creating policy recommendations. Their experience prefigures issues which will dominate in early childhood policy discussions in the future. Also, as these initiatives are succeeding in providing high quality, comprehensive services which meet the needs of children and families, their experience is an important test for the present policy system.

However, our choices in framing our case studies also create challenges as we address implications for public policy. One complication in reasoning about policy implications from these examples is that many of these agencies have learned how to "work" the present policy system in spite of its structural weaknesses. For example, many of these sites are successful in garnering and combining resources from a variety of sources and in coping with a variety of separate regulatory systems. Their success could lead to an interpretation that our present policy system is reasonably workable (or that crafting comprehensive, quality services is relatively effortless in the current policy environment); ignoring the fact that the approach seen in these agencies may require unusual levels of technical skill, energy, ambition, and ability to tolerate risk and uncertainty.

There are similar complications in drawing on these programs to address implications for practitioners. Exemplary programs explore challenges and strategies which point the way for their colleagues. However, it may be an error to assume that peer agencies can easily adopt strategies illustrated in these case studies. The challenge is to understand how much and why these initiatives differ from other early childhood programs. For example, these strategies are characterized by strong and capable local leadership and success in mobilizing local community funding to complement state and federal investments. What is the general level of management talent in the early childhood field? Can similar levels of private/local investment be obtained in most communities?

Given these caveats, our presentation of policy recommendations will follow the sequence of our analysis of policy effects:

- Implications for funding.
- Implications for enhancing program quality.
- Implications for promoting more effective federal-state-local partnerships.

Similarly, our discussion of implications for practice will be begin with key challenges for staff who work with children, proceed to discussion of implications for serving parents and families, and then to challenges for program managers.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

One contribution from this study is its portrait of how state and federal early childhood policies interact with local factors to influence the development of early childhood agencies. Themes which stand out in these case accounts include the following:

- The power of state and federal funding to start new things and the positive influence of external policy on the initial design of core services and staffing patterns in local agencies.
- The problems associated with present levels of public investment in limiting access to programs, and failing to support high levels of quality in local services or adequate compensation for early childhood professionals.

- The substantial initiative and autonomy of local agency directors to combine public programs and local resources in diverse, innovative ways to meet community needs.

- The capacity of local managers to promote levels of excellence in services at levels above and beyond the minimum standards set in state and federal policy.

Thus this study provides the basis to examine policy strategies which would support more widespread excellence and innovation in local early childhood agencies. What policy strategies would foster more initiatives with the innovative features and high quality found in our case study sites?

Funding Strategies

1. Coordinated expansion of federal and state public investment to equalize access to quality early childhood programs.

By selecting agencies regarded as innovative and successful, this study has profiled managers with above-average success in fund-raising and program development. However, current levels of public investment in young children limit the effectiveness of local agency directors. Many of these sites have enjoyed steady expansion of services, due to ingenious and heroic fund-raising efforts, yet they continue to face daunting waiting lists of unserved families. Resources are particularly lacking for programs for infants and toddlers and for working poor families. In addition, many agencies face a dilemma of fixed funding levels which fail to allow for increasing costs over time. In this situation, managers are forced to spend an inordinate amount of energy raising money and safeguarding the continuation of existing funding sources -- which diverts their attention from working to strengthen staff effectiveness, morale and service quality.
Thus, a fundamental priority for early childhood policy is to provide a steady expansion of services to low-income and working families towards the goals of school readiness, family self-sufficiency, and strengthening communities.

2. Supporting rates of funding which are consistent with program quality and a quality workforce.

Early childhood funding should reflect the costs of providing quality programs which meet the needs of young children and families. Unless funding rates are adequate, programs will be unable to pay adequate salaries necessary to attract well-trained staff members, or staff will be required to work with large numbers of children. Furthermore, there should be greater consistency in rates across different state and federal funding streams.

3. Encouraging local and private sector investment in early childhood services.

A key ingredient in the success of these programs is their ability to attract local businesses, community institutions and community residents to contribute to their operations. However, there is no robust set of policy strategies to encourage this ingredient. It is difficult to create uniform standards regarding what proportion of costs can be drawn from non-governmental sources without penalizing communities with fewer resources.

Quality Enhancement Strategies

4. Setting program standards which support quality services, but with suitable flexibility about strategies for meeting local needs.

State and federal early childhood programs should be undergirded with a common commitment to quality, as embodied in consistent program standards. Research and professional judgment support regulating key factors which protect the safety of children and create the preconditions for effective nurturing and instruction; namely, group size, staff training, adult:child ratios, family support and involvement and support for the health, nutrition, and other core needs of children and families. All forms of early care and education should be expected to meet standards on these measures.

Yet while policies need to be stronger and more consistent in supporting quality, they should be more easy going in other realms, such as the form and mix of service strategies appropriate to different local communities. As these case studies illustrate, there are a variety of effective approaches to serving young children and families, including home-based and center-based programming; various approaches to engaging, serving, and involving families; and different designs for staffing programs.

5. Service strategies which support a dual focus of enhancing child development and strengthening families and which sustain services over time.

Policies should allow programs to respond to the survival needs, schedules, and personal stresses typical of today's poor and working poor families at the same time as they provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences and other services for young children. Head Start's comprehensive performance standards give equal status to early childhood education, health, social services, and parent involvement. Project FACE combines parent education and home visits to families with infants and toddlers, a family literacy initiative, and prekindergarten classrooms. Other program guidelines should be revised to acknowledge the benefits of working simultaneously with young children and their families.

6. Building an infrastructure to support program quality and innovation.

All forms of early childhood programs and agencies should be able to benefit from the tools of monitoring, technical assistance, formative evaluation, and participation in professional networks. In particular, these case studies show the potential for peer exchange across program sites and types as a strategy to accelerate innovation and improvement in early childhood programs. Another crucial policy challenge is to create a more coherent career development system for staff members who work in early childhood programs, addressing needs for ongoing training, tied to a career ladder of credentialed roles, and with more consistency across major delivery systems to enhance career mobility.

7. Creating a leadership/management development system.

Early childhood program management is complex, consequential work, involving important decisions and executive responsibilities of considerable scope. However, the career development system for local early childhood administrators is fragmented and random rather than coherent and purposive. Since managers work for a mix of institutions (Head Start grantees, public school systems, independent non-profit agencies) there is no single credentialling authority for managers in this field. Indeed, in more than twenty states there are no training requirements for child care center directors. There are few university-based programs to prepare candidates for management positions. The majority of local leaders included in this study learned about the realms of fiscal and program management through trial and error and via informal mentoring relationships.

The lack of a system to prepare and support early childhood administrators is a structural problem but also a troubling symbolic statement. It implies that managing services for young children is not significant or distinctive as a professional role. States, foundations and the federal government should collaborate in initiatives to stimulate and support local leaders -- to bolster the skills and motivation of our present cadre of talent, to develop leaders for the future, and to use existing talent to mentor and train colleagues.

Intergovernmental Strategies

8. Easing the administrative burdens involved in administering multiple public early childhood programs.

These case studies illustrate the benefits of a diversified funding strategy and the local invention of approaches to program design and quality. However, our current infrastructure of policies creates few incentives and many barriers to this approach to local program administration. State and federal early childhood programs are designed and administered as if they were isolated entities, rather than a series of complementary funding streams and programs. Successful management of multiple sources of funding requires considerable skills and knowledge. Yet, most early childhood administrators have nowhere to turn for consultation on strategies for working with a mixed range of investors. State and federal policymakers and administrators should come together to find ways to make life simpler for local program managers, and to see how different funding streams and mandates can be made to work together more easily and productively at the local level.

9. Building community planning and responsibility for early childhood services.

As much as we need to create more programs with the qualities of the seven included in this study, we also need a more coherent system to govern early childhood services at the community level. This is a two-fold problem. First, we lack a technical planning capacity to guide decisions across program and agency lines and to dovetail with general purpose government. Secondly, we need a mechanism to embody and engender the general public interest in quality early childhood services. Early childhood services should become a concern and responsibility of local communities, rather than an activity which is perceived as controlled by professionals and funded by state and federal agencies.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVING PRACTICE

Chapter V highlighted strategies of staff members and directors working with young children and families. Across the country, in Head Start, child care and school-based initiatives, we found the following:

- Teachers working in a framework of developmentally appropriate classroom practices to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse set of children, incorporating parents as integral participants in classrooms, and working cooperatively with public schools.

- Early childhood agencies maintaining an amazing array of services, supports, and relationships with parents and family members. Building from their connections with children, staff members encourage parents to increase their skills in supporting child development and learning, in progress in education and employment, in obtaining health, housing and other forms of public services, and in learning to participate in and contribute to their communities.

- Managers playing a role of mediating between the worlds of public policy and funding sources, and the daily engagement of programs with children and families.

Rather than reiterating the innovative strategies reported in Chapter 5, we will focus here on challenges and dilemmas faced by classroom staff, family service staff, and program managers.

For Promoting Child Development and Learning

1. Refining and promoting teaching excellence within the paradigm of developmentally appropriate practice.

Consistent implementation of the principles of developmentally appropriate practice is a major asset for these programs and for the overall early childhood profession. Practitioners feel that they belong to a national community of professionals which stands behind a concrete, comprehensive image of effective practice. They also enjoy the benefits of a vocabulary to explain and defend their work with children, particularly in discourse with parents and public school representatives. The "DAP" construct includes clear markers which allow quick assessment of the qualities of physical space, materials, forms of activities, schedule, and instructional strategies.

However, success in implementing these outer markings of age-appropriate instruction gives rise to a new challenge: creating a second generation set of shared images of excellent teaching to guide further improvement in classroom practice. A risk is that once teachers have put in place the external features of a developmentally appropriate environment, they will assume a passive or routinized approach to their practice. Teachers may mistakenly overemphasize child-initiated learning and fail to work actively in observing, questioning, and suggesting ways to extend children's activities and ideas.

It is difficult to define and describe this next stage of sophistication and excellence in teaching. When children are free to move physically, choose their partners, and frequently invent their own activity as they engage with materials, there are correspondingly more complex choices available to teachers. Often the most effective strategy depends of sizing up the context of a particular group of children to guide plans and responses.

One strong emphasis within these programs is to assist teachers in taking a clinical approach to observing and tracking individual children -- getting to know them well as individuals, understanding how their minds work, and figuring out how to respond to their learning and developmental profile with different strategies and activities. Taking on this role, particularly through observations, and brainstorming with colleagues, provides rich opportunities for analysis and reflection. Another perspective stresses enhancing teachers' skills in talking with children and adapting activities and routines to the needs and responses of a particular group of children. A Training Coordinator from one program expressed the following views on this issue:

> "Problem-solving, skills in asking questions, and being better able to truly help children deal with emotions are some things where our staff struggle a bit. They can do an activity as planned, but some don't adapt creatively from the children's responses or challenge the children's thinking with questions as much as I'd like to see."

2. Working to continue to motivate and foster the professional development of staff members.

These flagship programs have been successful in recruiting and retaining a corps of teachers and supporting many individuals in career development from entry level positions to attainment of an initial credential in early childhood education. However, staff must contend with barriers including studying part-time while working, financing college courses, and often balancing work and home responsibilities:

> "A lot of our staff with Child Development Associate credentials are asking what they can do to progress further in career development. We're trying to create a personalized training portfolio for each staff member -- a way for teachers to view a total picture of training they've completed, what they see as their needs and goals and what their directors and peers may see as needs. Unfortunately, the majority of our staff are single parents and it's very difficult for them to get to college classes."

One approach towards fostering continued professional growth in staff is the use of experienced teachers as mentors for new staff members. Sheltering Arms uses a staffing strategy which includes a role of Instructional Lead Teacher in addition to an administrative Center Director in each site. They also encourage staff members to share their expertise with peers:

> "I'm encouraging staff to do presentations for other teachers. Belinda, who teaches our two-year-olds, is a fanatic with language activities --we call her the Flannel Board Queen because she has a story for everything. And Brenda, who's been working with infants for 27 year, has many things she could share with other caregivers. I'm building this goal into their performance appraisals for next year."

Agencies encourage staff members to attend state, regional, and national conferences to validate their work and keep them motivated to learn new pedagogical methods. Teachers in FACE programs attend meetings and training events several times a year where they have opportunities to present strategies and learn from colleagues in other communities. FACE is also creating a network of peer trainers, to support teachers and home visitors from their more established program sites to work with peers in communities beginning to implement FACE.

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3. Working to promote continuity with schools and successful transitions for children and families.

While many of the programs we visited have made progress in connecting with local schools, prospects for more universal and substantial progress in this domain are daunting. One set of barriers to easy, positive relationships between early childhood programs and public schools are simple conflicts in jurisdictional boundaries. For example, Child Development, Inc. serves children who will enroll in forty local school districts, and collaborates with a dozen intermediate agencies involved in serving students with disabilities. In other cases, many school districts enroll children from dozens of different types of child care, preschool, Head Start, nursery school and family day care home settings. Thus even accomplishing the simplest level of communication about mutual features of programs and expectations of parents and children can be an awesome assignment for early childhood and school administrators.

Second, there are many structural differences between early childhood agencies and public schools. These differences complicate communications and make it difficult to transfer practices and strategies from one setting to another in order to smooth out "bumps" in the transition process. Parent involvement and communication is more natural in most early childhood centers, where parents tend to bring their children into the classroom each day. By contrast, public school buildings are larger, more formidable edifices, often with confusing entrances, stern warning signs about visitation, and long hallways to navigate. Early childhood agencies and staff members often have a strong tradition of values and practices supporting substantial parental involvement in classroom life and in program governance, while public schools have a different history.

Third, incentives for school/early childhood partnerships are weak and uneven. In the near future, all Head Start programs will be required to create transition agreements with local schools, but there are no similar provisions attached to other forms of federal early childhood funding or public school programs. This policy context leaves it up to local managers to take the initiative and choose to pay the costs of genuine collaboration around core practices and policies.

Finally, when early childhood programs go beyond their boundaries to influence the wider school, they run up against deeply embedded "cultural constructions" of schooling that are difficult to change. The historical experience of school reform movements suggests that it is very difficult to change standardized patterns (Tyack and Tobin, 1994). All this suggests that continuity of early childhood practice upward to the primary grades must be systemic, involving outreach and communication with administrators and teachers as well as the wider community. Furthermore, such advocacy will have to be continuous, and will require resources, for it is unlikely that change will come quickly or easily.

For Family Support and Involvement

1. Programs face a set of challenges trying to gain participation of adult family members.

Families are generally eager to give their children the benefit of participating in an early childhood programs, and to gain even a partial subsidy of child care costs. However, it can be more difficult for staff to secure parent participation, particularly in forms of involvement which demand time, commitment, and effort. Most parent respond positively to outreach efforts of agencies to provide social support, recreation, tangible assistance for economic and family needs, although even these interchanges take time and require parents to divulge information about problems which they might choose to keep confidential. However, other aspects of family involvement are more demanding. Classroom volunteering and parent education programs require parents to contribute time; adult literacy requires study and confronting previous failures or negative encounters with schooling; involvement in advisory and policy committees requires development of new skills and taking risks in public. While many parents welcome opportunities to grow and to contribute to a program, others find it difficult to enter into more demanding aspects of family support strategies. Some parents are overwhelmed with personal problems such as substance abuse, domestic violence, or mental health difficulties. In other families, the survival demands of obtaining food, clothing and shelter command all of parents' time and energy. Working parents have more than enough tasks on their hands and parent involvement activities become another claim on their time. Program staffs struggle to connect with all of these types of parents and to adapt activities to their needs and capacities. One home visitor expressed the dilemma this way:

> "You have to be real careful with how far you go, because they can just walk away from the program. You just kind of have to go along, not really push the requirements on them, and make sure that they don't turn away."

2. Program staffs are negotiating the boundaries of their work with family members and the special situations they face.

Staff members have to negotiate a balanced approach to the range of demands on their work. There are no formula solutions to the issues they confront and tradeoffs have to be made. For example, when programs are family-oriented, teachers are called upon to spend time getting to know the families and sharing information about a child's problems and progress. They also have the added task of working with family advocates, home visitors, and other specialists who concentrate on family service and advocacy functions.

Home visitors, through the intimate contacts they have with families, confront a different set of challenges, often without adequate training and experience. They deal with a number of complex issues -- child abuse and neglect, marital problems, substance abuse, and severe mental health problems -- that they are not able to handle by themselves. They are sometimes caught between having to report families for abuse and neglect, and then feeling they have betrayed the trust of families. They may have to deal with families who need food, housing, and clothing assistance even before they can be receptive to parenting information. They must decide whether or not to continue trying to recruit or maintain distressed families when there are other families who need their services. They have to use their judgment on continuing home visits when husbands or companions threaten them for making mothers more assertive and independent. Each of these situations demands a great deal of support from management and in-service training.

Family service staff, too, are challenged to work with families in a way that avoids dependence and promotes independence. While advocates are willing to provide parents with the information and contacts they need to get help from community services, they expect parents to speak for themselves rather than have the advocate do all the negotiations. The advocates also juggle the roles of professional and trusted friend. They have to balance their time and availability to parents as advisers and counsellors, with the requests parents place on them after work hours or for services that go beyond the call of duty.

Another challenge for staff is working out respectful relationships with families from diverse cultural backgrounds. This is a dynamic process which may involve redefining parents' attitudes toward the school, their own families, and their peers. For many parents, sharp boundaries between home and school have been ingrained by historical and cultural traditions. Staff members try to impress upon parents the primacy of their educational role and their right to participate in their children's schooling. They persist even if they realize that change will neither be immediate nor their message necessarily reinforced when children transfer from preschool to school. Staff members also deal with mothers with domestic problems who are reluctant to speak about their experiences -- much less find help -- when that is contrary to cultural norms. The staff considers its task to make parents become "more comfortable in seeking help." Because family support involves not just a staff-participant relationship but also parents helping each other as peers, the staff members look for creative ways to break ethnic isolation and connect parents of various ethnic backgrounds with each other.

3. Programs face the challenge of defining and implementing high quality front line practices.

Although family support programs have proliferated over the last decade, little attention has been given to defining quality (Kagan, 1994). There is no position statement on appropriate parent-focused practices as has been developed for early childhood classroom practice (Powell, 1989). In addition, whereas a research-based consensus existed regarding quality standards for group size, ratios, and training of early childhood teachers, such standards have yet to be articulated for the family support field as a whole. This situation leaves it to local programs to create their own definitions and strategies to govern staffing patterns, strategies for working with families, the content of parenting programs, and the organization of service delivery. Programs face several challenges in these design and implementation decisions.

A great deal of variation characterizes the content of family support services. Programs may adopt packaged models of parenting curriculums, combine elements from the models with homegrown activities, or modify and adapt the models for local situations. Programs also offer a menu of activities, from social gatherings to family literacy, but have little or no information about their differential as well as combined impact on parenting skills, involvement in a child's education, and other program goals.

Programs need to develop standards and a strategy regarding the numbers and qualification of staff, staff to family ratios, schedules, space, transportation, drop-in child care, and access to comprehensive services. While packaged home visiting models such as Parents as Teachers and HIPPY have their respective standards in terms of frequency of home visits, curriculum, staff training, ratio of home visitors to families, the programs adapt and fine-tune these models to their local context and available resources. In some cases, the programs go beyond the minimum requirements of these models, indicative of their commitment to excellent service.

Programs face the challenge of putting many different components together and managing them. These components function as a system and require coordination among staff members within a program, as well as with the community of service providers. Developing these operational supports also takes a substantial investment of resources, including money, staff time, and space. While the programs strive to build their capacity in these areas, there are tradeoffs to be made when resources are limited.

For Improving Program Management

These case studies illustrate an impressive range of local management strategies, innovations and accomplishments. Agency administrators are key figures in creating a supportive environment for the challenging and delicate work of teachers and family support staff and they steer a course for their agencies through a complex and dynamic set of mandates and funding opportunities. We now step back to reflect on the most important challenges for local managers:

1. Managers balancing attention to external sources of funding and initiatives to promote local program services and professional development.

As we have described, managers in early childhood agencies face a continuing stream of judgments about how to allocate their time and energy. One realm of possibilities and demands comes from state, federal, and private funding sources, the pressures to sustain current funding sources and the potential to expand revenue sources. A second realm of opportunities involves leading efforts on quality, innovation, and professional development within one's own agency. One attribute observed in each of these agencies is a sense of initiative and originality in creating a shared identity and distinctive approach to early childhood practice. There are an endless array of opportunities to support the individual growth of staff members, to lead internal planning and evaluation efforts, to observe and give feedback on direct services, to brainstorm on new possibilities in strategies and conceptions of excellence. There are no models or convenient rules of thumb to govern how managers spend their time or judge productivity and effectiveness.

We conclude with the conviction that improving early childhood services is an important endeavor, with considerable payoff in improving the daily lives of children and families, making the job of public education more manageable, and contributing to stronger families and communities. We believe this study contributes to a more complete, balanced, and grounded image of how early childhood programs work in the present policy structure. And we believe that more accurate understanding of the interplay of public funding and policies; local management, staff capacity and motivation; and responses of families and communities will lead to more constructive and successful public policy. We trust that wider appreciation of the diversity of the early childhood community, the subtleties of practice, and the dynamic effects of policy and management will lead to renewed efforts to help all young children develop to their fullest potential.

CHAPTER IX - IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Monitoring Early Childhood Policy
and Implementation
Documenting Action Strategies
Participant-Driven Evaluation

IX. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As we noted in the Introduction, this study design provided a unique opportunity to investigate the interaction of state and federal policy, local agency management, and front-line practice across early childhood programs based in public schools, child care agencies, and Head Start grantees. From our immersion in this multi-level, multi-sector study, we suggest three research strategies to address the needs of policymakers and practitioners:

- Monitoring federal and state policy trends and studies of local implementation.
- Descriptive studies of service and practice strategies.
- Participant-driven evaluation of program effectiveness.

(Some of the ideas and questions in this Chapter were stimulated by our participation in a conference convened by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, the American Educational Research Association and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education on School-linked Comprehensive Services for Children and Families in October, 1994).

MONITORING EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Given the complexity, dynamics, and significance of early childhood policy, we recommend ongoing studies of how funding, program design, and support strategies are implemented in local communities. We urge that policy studies address the full range of local providers of early childhood services and pay particular attention to the interactive effects of multiple state and federal programs and policies. We suggest two specific priority strategies.

First, given the importance of state initiatives in the early childhood sector, we need an ongoing **data base on state-level early childhood policy**. A variety of valuable individual studies have been completed on child care program standards (Adams, 1990), policies on training and certification for staff members, (Morgan, et.al.,1993), early childhood programs in public schools (Mitchell, Seligson & Marx, 1989), and state prekindergarten programs (Adams & Sandfort, 1994). However, this strategy of commissioning individual studies has a number of weaknesses:

- Most reports are limited to a single sector or area of funding or policy, such as child care or Head Start -- so they miss the interactive effects of funding and policy across programs and agencies.
- There is no ongoing clearinghouse for information. Given the frequent changes in state legislation, regulatory policies, and budgeting, data rapidly become outmoded, and we lack the ability to track trends in early childhood policy.
- States face the burden of cooperating with an ongoing sequence of separate, uncoordinated surveys and requests for information.

Building on the methodologies of these individual studies, we recommend creating a data base which would include elements of funding, program designs, enrollment, approaches to eligibility and targeting, regulations on quality, policies on certification of staff members, and strategies to coordinate leadership and management. Within each element, data would be included across child care, Head Start, prekindergarten, parent education, family literacy and any other key sector of state policy leadership. The system would be designed to be updated annually and form the basis for ongoing reports to the nation. There would also be open access to data from this system for analysis from the perspectives of individual states, regions, and various interest and advocacy groups.

Second, we recommend studies on the **effects of federal program reforms** in early childhood, human services and public welfare. As this report is being prepared, Congress enacting welfare reform, significant budget reductions in education and human service programs, substantial consolidation and deregulation of categorical child care and early childhood programs, and devolution of decisionmaking to the state level. If all or any of these changes are enacted, studies should track the effects of these policy changes in (a) state administration, (b) local agency services and practices, (c) levels and targeting of enrollment, and (d) effectiveness of programs on children and families.

Any one of these changes could have substantial effects on the supply, demand, and management environment of early childhood agencies. For example, welfare reform provisions to require mothers of young children to work will increase the demand for child care. Budget reductions will limit the capacity of local agencies to serve needy families and create barriers to efforts to enhance program quality. Program consolidation could reduce local administrative costs but could increase uncertainty and instability for local agencies by disrupting present patterns of funding. Local agencies could also face major adjustments due to consolidation of programs in other areas of service. For example, the Child and Adult Care Food Program subsidizes the costs of feeding children in child care and Head Start centers. If this program is consolidated into a block grant with other nutrition programs, early childhood agencies could lose access to this significant source of support for program services.

In addition, there will also be substantial interactive effects if these proposals are enacted simultaneously or in partial forms. For example, program consolidation and enhancing the autonomy of state government in program direction could lead to more coherent and consistent governance and management of early childhood services. However, program consolidation could occur in a fashion which combines a number of current child care funding streams, but continues separate funding and management of Head Start, Chapter 1 and early childhood special education programs. What will be the costs and outcomes of implementing such substantial-yet-partial approaches to simplifying program structures?

For all these reasons, an important research priority is documenting the effects of this mix of policy changes as they are enacted and implemented at the federal, state, and local level. Implementation studies should examine effects on dimensions of cited above at each level in the policy and delivery system, across program lines, and with careful attention to the multiple perspectives of children, parents, staff members, program managers, collaborating family service agencies, state administrators, legislators, and leadership at the federal level.

DOCUMENTING ACTION STRATEGIES

A second form of research we endorse is descriptive, analytic accounts of how local managers and staff members are addressing difficult, significant problems of practice. Early childhood professionals need the opportunity to learn more systematically about how peers are addressing challenging issues in classrooms, in working with families, and in managing agencies. While evaluation of the outcomes of strategies would be ideal, practitioners would appreciate descriptive information about the content, costs, implementation requirements, feasibility, and reactions of participants. Compared to other sectors of education and human services, early childhood professionals have fewer sources for learning about experiences and strategies of their counterparts in other communities, or in other forms of early childhood agencies.

Here are examples of the types of challenges and questions which could be addressed through this form of research:

* How are teachers dealing with "out-of-control" children who cannot cope in regular classroom settings, as a result of exposure to violence and other multiple stresses at home?

* What do staff members handle conflicts with parents which may arise from differing knowledge, values, priorities, and styles of interaction?

* What combinations of staff members with different levels of experience, training and compensation form effective teams in classroom-based and home-based forms of service?
* How do local early childhood programs develop effective staff teams, within classrooms, within local centers, across widely dispersed sites, between central office and front-line staff members, and between classroom-based staff working with children and staff members who work primarily with parents?

* What practices in working conditions, scheduling, supervision, evaluation, training, and opportunities for collaborative planning and peer observation support staff motivation and excellence in their daily work?

* What types of training and support are effective for preparing staff members who come from backgrounds different from those of children and families who they work with?

* What training and ongoing support is effective for staff who work primarily with parents in home visitation, family support, direct training, advocacy, and group facilitation-type roles?

* How do different forms of early childhood agencies deal with cost and budget issues? What is the range of allocations to different categories of costs, what are the fiscal effects of different staffing patterns, what cost-saving strategies have been successful over time?

* How are agencies generating local community resources, contributions, and ownership in programs funded primarily from state and federal government sources?

PARTICIPANT-DRIVEN EVALUATION

A third research strategy we recommend is providing resources and technical assistance to enable local programs to study the effectiveness of their work. As we noted in our Chapter on Assessment of Outcomes, only a minority of these agencies are participating in formal evaluations. Even fewer have had the opportunity to design and initiate studies of the outcomes and effectiveness of their program services. Rather, most evaluation activity on early childhood services is designed at the state and federal level. We suggest that a program of grants to local agencies or agency-evaluator teams is a strategy which should be considered, to address questions such as the following:

* From the perspective of parents, what key factors draw them to early childhood programs, keep them connected as participants and enable them to be better teachers of their children?

* What barriers or deficiencies in programs lead to families failing to enroll, dropping out or failing to take advantage of services and opportunities?

* What happens to "waiting list" families who are eligible for but not enrolled in various forms of early childhood strategies?

* Are there typical trends or patterns in service utilization by families as they enter and move through comprehensive early childhood programs, such as high involvement in certain services initially and lower, more selective patterns of engagement as they become more self-sufficient?

* How do cultural factors affect the delivery of comprehensive early childhood services? What are the priorities of different types of families and in what ways should program services be altered to connect successfully with different types of parents?

* What are the connections between services and progress for parents, changes in their interactions with children, and outcomes for children in health, mental health, and education?

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